

**(RE)MAKING THE MARGINS: AN ORAL HISTORY OF
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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**(RE)MAKING THE MARGINS: AN ORAL HISTORY OF
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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ABSTRACT

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Thesis Supervisor: Prof. LEYLA NEYZİ

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This thesis investigates the encounter between university students and police officers during arrest, in the police car, in custody, and in prison. By focusing on the spatial encounters between the police and the university students this thesis aims to understand the interrelation between political violence, and student subjectivities. The study concentrates on the narratives of the students not only regarding spatial and performative encounters with the police, but also regarding students' own social and moral worlds. In addition to analyzing these encounters in relation to students' class, ethnic and gender positions, it also focuses on the aftermath of these encounters by looking at family relations and the emotional effects of the aftermath of the violence.

ÖZET

SINIRLARIN YENİDEN ÇİZİLMESİ: ÜNİVERSİTE ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN SÖZLÜ TARİHİ

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KÜLTÜREL ÇALIŞMALAR YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ, AĞUSTOS 2020

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Anahtar Kelimeler: gençlik, politik şiddet, öznellik, polis, üniversite

Bu tez, üniversite öğrencileri ile polisin gözaltı sırasında, gözaltı aracında, gözaltında ve hapisanedeki karşılaşmalarını ele almaktadır. Bu tez, bahsedilen mekânsal karşılaşmalara odaklanarak politik şiddet ile öğrencilerin öznelliği arasındaki ilişkiyi anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma sadece polisle mekânsal ve performatik karşılaşmaları değil öğrencilerin kendi sosyal ve ahlaki dünyalarını da göz önünde bulundurarak öğrenci anlatılarına odaklanmaktadır. Bu karşılaşmaları öğrencilerin sınıfsal, etnik ve toplumsal cinsiyet pozisyonları ile ilişkilendirerek incelemenin yanında, bu tez aynı zamanda aile ilişkilerine ve bu karşılaşmaların duygusal etkilerine bakarak bu karşılaşmaların sonrasına da odaklanmaktadır.



For Ali

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1. INTRODUCTION

“And the wolf was there bristling hair and breathing fire whenever there was violence because if you write about violence, I found out quickly, if you are serious, it sticks to you no matter how hard you try to get the drop on it. Worse still, you can easily make it worse. How come? After all, common sense would tell you that writing is one thing, reality another. How could one bleed -as they say- into the other?”(Taussig 2010, 28)

This thesis is about arrested university students from one of the most privileged and successful universities in Turkey. Throughout the thesis, I try to capture the moment of the encounter between the students and the police during arrest, in the police car, and in custody. After a spontaneous student protest for peace, the police started to make raids to students’ dormitories or houses to capture anyone involved in the protest. The next day, seven students who made a press release protesting their friends’ arrest were taken from the campus, yet they were released after they had been patrolled around the city for eight hours via police bus. Then, the “witch hunt” started; everyone who appeared in the pictures or videos of the initial protest was searched and arrested. Although some of the students were arrested before outside the campus, police intervention to the campus was shocking and unprecedented for all. Hence, I focus on students’ arrest in a particular university not only because I want to pursue localized, heterogeneous material practices of the state and police in the university, but also because I try to understand the moment of intrusion before it is normalized. Since state intrusion and violence to the students were unprecedented in its form and excess, I believe the topography of this particular event could help investigate current technologies of state violence and its interrelation with political subjectivities. “Violence,” as Pradeep Jeganathan suggests, “is only visible in the cusp things, at the moment of its emergence as a violation, before its renormalization and relegitimization.” (JEGANATHAN, Das, and Poole 2004, 70)

I argue that arrest and violence have become a political tactic to marginalize stu-

dents and their opinions, including their right to protest the state. The public arrest is a way of creating a “culture of terror and fear” (Taussig 1984) besides being a tool for marking oppositional students through violence. Through the narratives of encounters between the students and the police, I look at the state’s material practices, particularly focusing on the bodily and spatial construction of these encounters. I aim to map the topography of violence with a focus on the spatiality and performativity of state practices as well as the utterances of police officials. To do so, I organized the chapters according to space: during the arrest, in the police car, in custody, and in prison.

Furthermore, I aim to understand students’ attempts to make their interpellation intelligible and the formation of their subjectivities and political agencies. This thesis considers this particular case of state violence as an attempt to marginalize these dissident students through the very act of violence and torture. This is certainly not to say they were already marginalized or that they embody marginalized identities, but rather to say that the act of violence is integral in the constant redrawing of the boundaries between the center and the margins through negotiations of practicing violence, denying violence, documenting violence, resisting the violence, justifying violence or delegitimizing violence.

On the other hand, one of the most significant points of this thesis is the heterogeneity of students in terms of background, political subjectivity and the way in which students reappropriate and narrate their experiences. While some of the students are members of leftist organizations and arrested before in connection with other protests, many of them have never been arrested before. While most of them come from middle-class families, their families’ political orientation is ranges from right to left. Some of the students are Kurdish, but they do not speak Kurdish except for one student. Most of the students’ parents are working for the state as a teacher, engineer, or even a soldier. Therefore, in this thesis, I argue that the arrest of the students and excessiveness of violence shows the arbitrariness and uncertainties of terrorism accusations, which has a rather long past in Turkey.

State violence has a long and dark history in Turkey. However, the 1980 coup d’etat was a turning point for systemized torture, extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances that were used against leftist and Kurdish movements (Can 2016; Yildiz and Piggott 2007). After this harsh repression, Turkey shifted towards a more neoliberalist and consumerist society (Bozarslan 2013). In 2002, AKP came to power with the promises of democratization, liberalization, European Union membership, overall pluralist, religious but not necessarily Islamist orientations (Dagi* 2004; Özbudun and Hale 2010). In 2011, when the AKP won the general elections

for the third consecutive time, “New Turkey” was utilized as a slogan implying a new social and political order. “New Turkey”, where all the opponents of the AKP government were silenced, was often criticized as authoritarian (Waldman and Caliskan 2017). Some turn to the “authoritative turn” as a categorization for the post-2011 AKP government (Özbudun 2014; Tansel 2018) while others draw attention to the coexistence of reform and repression before 2011 (Erensü and Alemdaroğlu 2018; Yeşil 2018). Nevertheless, two turning points; Gezi protests and corruption investigations created major crises in the AKP government which adopted more authoritarian, nationalist measures (Kaygusuz 2018). In addition, the 15th July 2016 coup attempt led to two years of state of emergency which has become a threshold for growing authoritarianism and human rights violations (Erensü and Alemdaroğlu 2018; Yonucu 2018*a,b*). With the coup d’état attempt, Turkey has turned into a more authoritarian, nationalist, neoliberalist, security state (Waldman and Caliskan 2017; Yilmaz 2018).

In this framework, scholars have argued that state violence has become the means of protecting public order and security against the "internal enemies," which consist of different ethnoreligious groups (Berksoy 2010; Tezcür 2009; Yonucu 2018*a,b*). After the 2000s, it has been argued that classical forms of torture in custody and prisons have been replaced with nonlethal forms of violence such as tear gas, pepper gas, stun gas, and plastic bullets that are experienced collectively in the public sphere rather than police stations (Can 2016). Yet, especially with the 15th July military coup attempt, there has been an increase in human rights violations, including torture in custody (Yonucu 2018*a*). In the period of provisional liberalization in the 2000s, Turkey witnessed rising civil engagement with human rights to harmonize its policies with EU standards (Akarsu 2018; Babül 2020). However, the discrepancy between liberal training and illiberal practice has been argued for the police force (Akarsu 2018, 2020).

Thus, state violence has deepened in Turkey, especially in recent years. Within this historical framework, how can we trace the topography of violence through narrations of torture? How can we understand the arrest of the students in “New Turkey”? How can we map the interplay between institutional police structure, informal rules, or “exceptional” practices by police officers and officers’ different subjectivities and behaviors? What are the temporal and spatial parameters within which violence becomes visible/invisible, legitimate/illegitimate, normal/abnormal for officials and students? How do these students experience the torturous encounter with the institutions of the state and police officers in different spatial circumstances? What are the interrelations between gender, class, and ethnicity in acts of torture? Are there differences between the students who are “experienced” in such encounters

and those with no experience, regarding their perceptions of arrest and torture? These questions are at the heart of my research.

In the second chapter, I focus on the process of arrest in detail, with three scenes of the arrest. These three scenes rely on three student narratives, which differ from each other in terms of where and how they were taken into custody. These three scenes help me to lay down the spatial and performative aspects of the arrest. Moreover, in the second chapter, I also focus on the historical relationship between youth and politics. Yet, I emphasize the differences between students in terms of backgrounds and political subjectivities. I argue that the arrest of the students is a way to mark and criminalize their bodies publicly and excessiveness of violence an attempt to marginalize the students.

In the third chapter, I mainly describe the students' experiences in the police car. I argue that the police car is a "space of exception" where police violence is normalized, and banalized. Here, I consider interrogation as an integral part of the torture and also focus on the discourses of police officers in the police car. I believe the discourses of police officers are significant in understanding various technologies and techniques of violence in different spaces. In addition, as the body of the dissident is never neutral, I analyze the police violence in relation to class, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. To do so, I give examples from the narratives of various students.

In the fifth chapter, I focus on the experiences of students in custody. The students were faced with various conditions in custody, including torture and interrogation. Yet, here, I argue that violence in custody is arbitrary and even meaningless. Therefore, I discuss police violence as an attempt to create a culture of terror and fear. Uncertainty and randomness of violence empower this environment of fear. On the other hand, I argue the police itself is the punishment in this chapter by worsening the conditions of custody. I also mention the student encounters with other detainees from various political organizations. I believe these encounters worth telling particularities of student experiences and worth researching further.

In the last chapter, I discuss the prison experiences of students including circumstances of wards and social relations within the wards. I also focus on the aftermath of the violence. Here, I describe the family relations of the students to understand the effects of violence by focusing on the oral histories of some of the students. Moreover, I consider fear as a common emotional result in the aftermath of the violence.

1.1 Positionality

1.1.1 One Year After

On a beautiful spring morning, I was walking towards campus with mixed emotions and the urge to turn away. Exactly one year ago, some students protested the war and asked for peace inside this very campus. After their protest, two days later, a couple of students were taken from dormitories or their homes. Then, a “witch hunt” started; everyone who appeared in the pictures or videos of the initial protest was searched for and arrested. It has been one year after the arrest of the students, and they had decided to make a press release for the first anniversary of the “the events”. I knew some of the students, and I interviewed a couple of them. I perfectly understood that I had to go while not wanting to go since I had a difficult decision to make, whether to join the group or not. Around ten security guards were chatting at the gate, which was odd because usually there are few guards only. As I walked towards the scene where the press release would take place, I saw around ten students talking between themselves and some familiar faces. I looked around carefully to spot a civilian police officer or any police. I sat somewhere close where I could observe. At that point, they all gathered, and one of them said, “We are about to start; anyone who wants to join is welcome” and waited while looking around. I knew her; she was my first interviewee. In two minutes of silence, no one made a move to join them. I thought if I would not join them now, defend their cases, how could I ask about their experiences, and how could I expect them to trust me. Yet, I was afraid of being spotted, being arrested, all the things they had to face one year ago because I know how the story goes. They take pictures, they follow, they observe, and you become a criminal, terrorist, traitor. This was about risk calculation. The decisions we make not to be marked as criminals and treated as criminals. I could not hear one word of that press release. I was thinking about the difference between looking and being looked at. We were a small group gathered in the same spot where the peaceful protest took place, and everyone else was looking at us. It was a weird feeling to be looked at and seen as a part of a group that represents things we cannot control. Exactly one year ago, the students I interviewed organized a protest for peace in this campus’s exact spot. After the press release, I said hello to familiar faces. Yagmur, my first interviewee, was sitting on the bench, she said; “Sorry, I froze one moment. We were expecting something to happen.” She was leaning forward with

crossed arms and looking anxious. I noticed she was wearing pants, unlike the last time when she was arrested. I remembered how the police insulted her because of her skirt. I said; “Really?”, I did not know what to say. She replied, “Yes, they brought TOMA”¹. Then, I started to look around again very carefully, whether actually there are civilian police around. There must be, like vultures. I met new people and set a date for interviews. While leaving the campus, I was constantly looking behind to see whether someone was following me. Although I saw no one, I felt no relief.

One year before the anniversary of the arrest, it was a regular Thursday. I was supposed to attend a class at this same university, but I could not wake up. Hence, I was not on campus by chance. When I heard the news, I was shocked and felt guilty for not being there. From this point, my research with the students has started first as a class project, then as a thesis. I did not know the students in person, but their faces were familiar, while their narratives of violence were strange.

In the introduction of “Violence in War and Peace,” Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Phillipe Bourgois argue that anthropological witnessing puts the anthropologist inside human events

“as a responsive, reflexive, and morally or politically committed being, a person who can be counted on to ‘take sides’ when necessary and to eschew the privileges of neutrality.” (Scheper-Hughes, Bourgois et al. 2004, 13)

They are offering a more human role of engaged anthropology while recognizing the limitations and weaknesses of ethnography. Forcing the visibility of violence and political struggle against diverse types of oppression seemed not only a noble profession but also a necessary position when in the presence of relentless violence and persecution. While recognizing the significance of engaged anthropology, I was drawn into studying violence, particularly police violence, because in an environment in which political oppression is so severe, academic indifference would be akin to complicity with political oppression. Yet, soon I understood the difficulty of studying and writing violence.

I am personally invested in studying this particular violence because I am graduated from this university. The campus is one of my homes as a former student who still visits the campus and attends various classes. Hence, throughout this research, I could not stop thinking that I could have been one of the students who were

¹(anti-riot) water cannon vehicle

arrested, tortured, interrogated, and imprisoned. I do not mean to undermine the actual experience of violence, which continues in the aftermath of the incidents. On the contrary, the fear and terror I feel shows the excessiveness, yet arbitrariness of state violence in “New Turkey”. How do we study and write violence if it continues and deepens? In the introduction of "Fieldwork Under Fire," Nordstrom and Robben (1995) argue that:

“Conceiving of violence as a dimension of living rather than as a domain of death obligates researchers to study violence within the immediacy of its manifestation.”

(Nordstrom and Robben 1995, 6). However, they also mention the impossibility of linear narratives in the fieldwork under fire. This is the reason I mostly focus on students’ narratives, not only through quotations but through detailed stories as much as I can. I feel burdened to tell their experiences as much as possible. Nevertheless, although my position as a former student helped me communicate with students and build trust, I mostly felt as an “outsider”. First of all, as I noticed in the middle of the research, the police, the judge, the lawyers, and I were asking the same questions. Secondly, I learned that violent interrogation in custody is called “interview”. Despite the environment of fear and paranoia, all of the students agreed to talk with me except one, but self-censorship was inevitable for the students either consciously or unconsciously. Yet, there are no “false” statements in oral sources (Portelli 1998, 68). As Taussig nicely asks, “How could one bleed -as they say- into the other?” (Taussig 2010, 28).

1.2 Methodology

I conducted my research in one of the most privileged and successful universities in Istanbul, but to protect the identities of students I interviewed, I avoid mentioning the name of the university or the details of incidents that led to arrests. I conducted sixteen in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the students who have been arrested. I use pseudonyms throughout the thesis for the purposes of privacy and security. I worked with students, including six females and ten males ranged from 21 to 29 years old. Only two of the female students were imprisoned, so information

regarding women's prisons is limited. The number of male arrestees is more than females, so this fact is reflected in my research.

Meeting arrested students was not difficult for me as a former student in the same university. In my preliminary research, I met five students who were arrested from the campus. Later, I managed to arrange a second meeting with four of them. All the students I talked to were helpful. Only one student did not agree to meet with me. These sixteen interviews are narratives of life-stories, including not only details of incidents but also including personal details such as family relations, as well as emotional effects.

First, I considered them as a group of leftist students by adapting the common public perception. However, soon I realized the immense differences between students. Focusing on individuals helps me challenge the conceptions of homogeneity and coherence within the student group (Abu-Lughod 1991, 154). They have various backgrounds, as I mentioned above. They are also from various departments of the university which accepts successful students in the national university entrance exams.

2. THE ARREST

2.1 Scene 1

Around 5 a.m., six students were in a deep sleep on their beds. The only light was the one coming from the corridor through the closed corridor. The only window was closed, so the room was hot and filled with breathing sounds. Six students' breathing was enough to heat the small room. There were six slim closets and one small table with two chairs. No one heard the special forces coming inside until they poked the students with their guns. After asking which one is Anıl's bed, one of them threw him to the floor. The first thing he saw was army boots. While turning his eyes up, he saw camouflage and a machine gun. While waking up, this man looking down at him was a member of the special forces standing with his machine gun. In the small dorm room besides six students who had been sleeping, Anıl noticed three special forces, two civilians and two regular police officers and the dorm security. He was shocked while trying to wake up. In the meantime, the dorm manager came inside, and the room got even more crowded. Anıl was given a paper stating an order of custody in his name and many others. He asked what happened; they answered: "You have been involved in an incident". While he was dressing, one police officer stated that it would be better if he would not wear the socks with the English flag. Anıl changed his socks and asked the police whether he could eat something. The police approved, and Anıl started to eat honey and nuts on the table while the dorm manager was talking about how innocent and decent a kid he is. Once they asked to him to identify his closet, one police officer skimmed through the closet. Police officers pulled out a book; it was "The state and Revolution" by Lenin. He pulled out another one, "A People's History of the World," by Chris Harman. Then, he pulled out another; "Ayat ve Slogan"¹ by Ruşen Çakır. The officer seemed confused

¹"Ayah and Slogan"

and pulled out another one; “Dokuz Işık”² by Alparslan Türkeş. The police officer turned his questioning eyes to his superior and said; “There are too many books here, amirim³.” The superior police officer looked at Anıl and ordered, “Write, no criminal element”. After looking at the books in his closet, they asked for his phone, laptop and their passwords. As Anıl hesitated one moment, they argued that it would be better that he would give the passwords voluntarily not to draw any suspicion; after all, he did not have anything to hide, did he? On the way to the police car, he asked whether they were going to handcuff him. Since he was not resisting, they said it was unnecessary. They let him smoke one cigarette in front of the dorm. Meanwhile, a helicopter flew above the dorm, three akrep⁴ were stationed in various points of the dorm, and special forces were patrolling the dormitories. After he had looked over this unusual view, he was taken to the police car.

2.2 Scene 2

Abdullah, a 25 year old senior student, was one of the first students I interviewed. Our first meeting was in front of the library on the campus. He came out of the library where he was studying for the final exams. We both agreed to sit on the bench outside next to the library with two paper cups of tea. As I asked simple questions, he answered politely and shortly with a smile. He had an infectious polite smile with glimpses of shyness. From his accent, I could tell that he is Kurdish. He was from Van, where his family still lives. He came to Istanbul for college and was staying in an apartment with his friends. He was arrested from the campus with his six friends while attempting to make a press statement. He, like others, was taken merely because of trying to hold people back from the police. At the end of the interview, I knew his arrest was random and unexpected.

Our first meeting had included many poses and silences, unlike the second one, which was almost one year after our first meeting. Later, I was going to learn how these interviews could create fear and paranoia, especially right after the events. Our second meeting took place in a café near the campus. In the beginning, we chatted about our lives, and I could tell he was warmer and more comfortable in

²“Nine Lights”

³superior

⁴scorpion police vehicle

this meeting, unlike the last time. Between our interviews, he had graduated and found a new job. Although I already knew that he was arrested in a press release and dragged to the police car through the campus, I brought up his arrest process further. He recalled how he resisted the police officers and how they dragged him to the car. He emphasized how he held a pole not to be taken and how the police forced him. I asked why:

“A: Because I wasn’t guilty, I did not do anything wrong. They were not supposed to take me. Even in the police car, I said I did not do anything wrong; you cannot handcuff me. It was very funny.

S: What did they say?

A: They kept hitting. What would they do? I said four-five of you are attacking me here, is this right?”

At this point, we both started to laugh. I remembered how he was taken in the first place. He explained in the first interview:

“I tried to hold someone. Actually, I thought they were the employees in our university. I thought they were the security of the school or something. While pulling him back. . . The police officer was holding a friend, trying to take her. I tried to pull her back. He looked back. I looked at him too. We looked in each other’s eyes. Then, someone catches me from my back.”

I remembered how we both laughed at this absurdity. He continued:

“A: This was so weird. It was momentary. It took a really short time.

S: You didn’t think you would be taken into custody?

A: I didn’t think so. It was really a harsh reaction. There were twenty police officers. I wasn’t expecting this. There was a tension I wasn’t expecting. I wasn’t expecting twenty police officers there. That moment was so funny.”

2.3 Scene 3

Several weeks after the students were arrested from the campus, in a normal day, Ahmet left the library and exited the campus door. While walking towards the subway, a friendly-looking man stopped him and showed his police ID. The civilian police officer politely requested to check his ID. Afterwards, surprisingly the police officer directed him to the parking lot across the campus for the identity check. Ahmet anxiously followed him and offered no resistance. Later he recounted to me that he consciously had chosen to comply since he did not expect to be arrested as a member of no political organization. Informed by other students' stories of torture in custody, Ahmet knew how this so-called identity check could have gone seriously wrong. Ahmet purposefully avoided to show any kind of noncooperation and fearfully hoped to be free after the identity check. He was taken to a room in the parking lot like other students who had faced the same process. Many of the students who were arrested after the protest were taken to this parking lot, which had become a center for the police. Later, students were going to name this parking lot "torture house"⁵. In the same room, in the parking lot, Ashi, who had been arrested some week ago, had heard other students' screams from the videos that police officers were watching via their personal phone. While waiting in this room, Ahmet had a chance to text his friends to inform them about his arrest. One of the police officers saw him texting and asked him what he was doing. As Ahmet acknowledged texting his friends, the police officers roughly ordered; "Stand up!". He complied. The officer continued; "Take off glasses!" he obeyed. "Wear your glasses!" the officer ordered; he followed the order. He showed no resistance due to the expectation of physical violence. When Ahmet sat down handcuffed from his back, the police started to interrogate Ahmet by showing photographs of the protest. They asked him to identify students from the protest. Ahmet surprisingly noticed that the police officer was a member of a private Facebook group for the university students only. Ahmet tried to gain time by making up names since police was slapping or pulling his hair if he did not respond. After police officers had forced him to give his password of his phone, they checked his texts while insulting and interrogating him. Where was he from? Did he have any scholarships? What were his parents' jobs? Was he a dishonored terrorist, a traitor? While listening to this questioning, Ahmet was "laughing inside" and "pretended to be afraid of them". When the police read the texts, making fun of the police, the color of the events has worsened. Apparently, Ahmet had offered his friends to do identity checks of the police at the entrance of the campus in order to keep them outside. Ahmet "deserved" the beating he received after this. After taking his phone, they took him to the police bus to visit the hospital for a medical report stating, "no physical abuse".

⁵"ışkencehane"

2.4 Youth and Politics

As I mentioned in the introduction, the process of arrests and police intrusion started with the student protest for peace inside the campus. All the students who were detected in the photos or the videos of the protest were either searched or arrested although the presence of some was simply accidental or spontaneous. In that sense, students' arrest was independent from their ethnoreligious backgrounds or political subjectivities even though the attitudes of the police officers are very much affected by these identities. Hence, I argue that these narratives are an example of the expanding boundaries of the state, in other words, the arrest of the students is an attempt to marginalize the students or any oppositional voice in the public space particularly in universities. This does not mean that university students have not been arrested before from university campuses in Turkey. This does not also mean that all of the students I talked to were never arrested before. Yet, the police intrusion to this particular university and arrest from the campus were unprecedented for the students because this has not occurred for years, so it was an unexpectedly violent intrusion

The students whom I interviewed were taken into custody at various times and places with different methods. Among the students I talked to, seven were taken into custody in the middle of the day from the campus while trying to make a press release. Every one of them was taken by at least three civilian police officers and dragged to the police bus. Two of them were taken from their dorm rooms at dawn by special forces. After the events, several weeks, many civilian police officers were patrolling the campus and looking for wanted students. In the meantime, random background checks, special forces walking around with their machine guns, surveillance by civilian police officers, combat boot footsteps echoing in the library had become usual. The rest of the students were arrested during this time. They were usually taken around the campus while leaving the campus with the excuses of identity check as in Scene 3. Unlike the protest, they were taken individually without using force. I chose to bring together these scenes because they represent the typical processes that students face during an arrest. In this chapter, I focus on the process of arrest in terms of spatial and performative performance of the state.

Although these three scenes seem different from one another, they are displays of the same "event". Overall, arrests, patrolling police officers on campus, random identity checks, as well as constant surveillance of the state were "extraordinary" for the students. Besides constant police intrusion and surveillance, which is unprecedented

in its form for the university, students also were “hunted” because of a peaceful antiwar protest as one of the students put it. Therefore, this event was not only extraordinary for the individual biographies, but it was also extraordinary for the collective memory of one of the most prestigious universities which harbor successful students from various socio-economic backgrounds in Turkey.

All sixteen students I interviewed ranged in age from 21 to 29 years old, and I consider them part of the “youth”. Although demographically ages between 15 and 24 are labeled as a youth, I believe the concept of the youth is more flexible, a culturally constructed phenomena defined as “liminal time of transition from childhood to adulthood” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005; Neyzi 2001). In Turkey, “youth” turned into a political category with the Turkish Republic’s establishment in 1923 (Lüküslü 2009). Leyla Neyzi investigates the construction of youth in public discourse in three historical periods; between 1923-1950 as an embodiment of a new nation, between 1950-1980 as “rightist” or “leftist” rebels and post 1980 as apolitical consumers, challenging traditional representations of themselves (Neyzi 2001, 412). Hence, 1980 military coup fostered depoliticization of youth while bringing neoliberalization (Bozarslan 2013; Neyzi 2001). Recently, “red youth subculture” which includes revolutionary children of leftist militants and generational memory in martyrdom has also been studied (D’Orsi 2018)

In my research, I interviewed students from various backgrounds in terms of class, ethnicity, and ideology. While some of them come from rightist families, some come from politically active leftist families. Therefore, I discretely avoid putting them in the category of “youth subculture” and homogenizing them in any way although they have similar experiences during arrest, in custody or in prison, they share similar feelings; shock, surprise, fear, anxiety, even anger. On the contrary, I argue that they are different enough not to belong any subcategory. Hence, they were not arrested because of marginalized ethnoreligious or political identities.

If they were not arrested because of their marginalized ethnoreligious or political identities even though some might belong to these identities, here, we encounter a different sort of state violence which expands its boundaries. As I discussed in the introduction, some scholars have already argued that state violence has become the means of protecting public order and security against the “internal enemies” which consist of different ethnoreligious groups (Berksoy 2010; Tezcür 2009; Yonucu 2018*a,b*). With the anti-terror law which passed in 1991 and broadened in 2007, “political crimes” have been categorized as terror crimes due to a very vague and broad legal definition of terror in Turkey (Bargu 2014; Yonucu 2018*a,b*). Since then, anti-terror law has been weaponized against different ethnoreligious groups,

including Kurdish, leftist, and Alevi activists, yet especially after the 15th July coup attempt, it has also been weaponized against privileged groups (Yonucu 2018*a*, 13). Hence, “internal enemies” consisted of leftist and Kurdish militants (Bargu 2014), Alevi working-class populations (Yonucu 2018*b*). I argue that this incident is a perfect example of a broadened category of “terrorist” in “New Turkey” where all opponents of the AKP government are silenced. In the introduction of “Traitors: Suspicion, Intimacy, and the Ethics of State-Building”, Sharika Thiranagama and Tobias Kelly state:

“The traitor lies not so much at the margins or beyond the nation but at its heart. She or he is not the stranger, the common enemy, but is in fact always potentially one of us” (Thiranagama and Kelly 2011, 9)

Therefore, they argue that “treason” is always a socially and historically constructed category which is a manifestation of the state’s claims to power. This exact power lies in uncertainty or even arbitrariness of punishment, which can be deployed anytime to anyone.

Although the students’ experiences differ from each other, and they decodify these experiences according to their own particular social and moral worlds, I believe there are common patterns in their narrativization. Of course, the first noticeable similarity is that they all are the students of the same university. One of the common patterns in the narratives of the students is the sacredness of the university campus. For them, the university campus was a protected space free from police intrusion and state violence. The university is a constructed and phantasmatic sacred space for the students. Yael Navaro-Yashin uses the term “make-believe space” to refer to not only imagination work but also to material work in constructing space (Navaro 2012, 5). Hence, the police’s physical intrusion to the campus entails new meanings not only for individual political biographies but also for collective memory in the university both materially and symbolically for the students.

2.5 “Hey you, there!”

In his famous theory of ideology, Althusser gives an example of a scene where a police officer hails, “Hey, you there!” to an individual. The addressed person turns around “believing/suspecting/knowing that is for him,” so becomes interpellated and turns into a subject (Althusser 1971, 41). “Thus ideology hails or interpellates individuals as subjects” (Althusser 1971, 41). Didier Fassin discusses the arrest of three black boys, including his son, in the urban margins of France in relation to Althusser’s interpellation concept (Fassin 2013, 7). For him, interpellation works at two levels; one in a juridical sense referring to the literal police questioning and two, in a political sense in which

“they (three boys) understand that is not enough to be innocent in order not to be deemed guilty – and above all through which they become aware that what was happening to them is related not to what they have done, but to what they represent” (Fassin 2013, 7).

From this perspective, the shock of the students I interviewed becomes more meaningful since their arrest creates a clear shift in their subject position. Laughing at Abdullah’s repetitive and insistent objection to his arrest as in Scene 2 stems from this exact acknowledgment; no one has to be “guilty” to be arrested. The laugh we share at that moment proves that we also share “poisonous knowledge” (Reynolds et al. 2000). His knowledge comes from “his experience” in a strong and vital sense of experience whereas mine comes from witnessing through the narratives of the students.

Hence, in all three scenes, the arrest of the students either with brutal force or with a cold and polite power of uniform in a dorm room or in the street, made students feel powerless in the face of law enforcement which assigned them new roles as “restrained criminals” Fassin argues regarding three boys:

“On the one hand, they come to understand what they embody in the eyes of society: ‘This is what you are,’ they are told. On the other hand, they internalize this representation they are given of themselves: ‘Become what you are!’ they are ordered. This engagement of the body – embodiment and internalization – is not entirely at a conscious level. It is experienced rather than analyzed...At a deeper level, this humiliating and unjust experience often induces a sense of shame and sometimes guilty which is all the harder to repress because it is not based on any objective reality: the individual is ashamed of the violence to which he has been subjected, and feels guilty of a sin that he has not committed”

(Fassin 2013, 8).

Similarly, I argue that students' subjectification occurs both physically and symbolically in the eyes of the police or the public and the students themselves. This emerges "through affects, first and foremost the fear" Fassin states (Fassin 2013, 8). In this chapter, I focus on this subjectification process spatially and performatively on the point of the arrest of the students.

On the other hand, the "subjection" of the students is neither the same nor fixed. There are clear distinctions between students who have been arrested before and the ones who have not. Judith Butler, influenced by Foucault, argues in "The Psychic Life of Power" that in subjectification, power not only subordinates but also sustains and forms the subject (Butler 1997, 84). Yet, the subject is never fixed, and it "is the occasion for a further meaning" (Butler 1997, 99).

Hence, I neither argue for homogeneity between students nor represent them in fixed subject positions. However, following this literature, I argue the arrest of the students and their "embodied memory" is significant to understand both state violence and subjectification of the students inside this order of violence. Since state intrusion and violence to the students was unprecedented in its form and excess, the effective topography of this particular event could help to investigate current technologies of state violence and its interrelation with political subjectivities despite the differences between students.

2.6 Performative and Spatial Formation of the Arrest

In the context of Belfast, Ireland, Allen Feldman considers arrest as follows: "performative display reactivates the political potency of the state which has been suspended by the 'terrorist act'" (Feldman 1991, 89) He views arrest and interrogation as both symbolic and instrumental modes of hierarchizing, which aims not only to expand spheres of domination but also "reactivate the political potency of the state" (Feldman 1991, 89). Therefore, for him, an arrest is not only a bureaucratic and judicial means to punish the "terrorist," but it is also a performance of power which in itself is a ritual of punishment that activates state power through the arrested body of the individual. At this point, Feldman references Foucault, who famously referred to public execution as

“a policy of terror to make everyone aware through the body of the criminal, of the unrestrained presence of the sovereign. The public execution did not reestablish justice; it reactivates power” (Foucault 1979, 49)

For Feldman, similar to the public execution of criminals, collective arrest of “terrorists”, house raids, and violence are not only ways to mark the “criminal” but also they are part of the “performative construction of state power” (Feldman 1991, 86). Therefore, individual or collective arrest of dissidents are capable of generating political meanings.

In spite of divergence in terms of their method, there are common patterns between the arrest of the students. Following Feldman, I argue that the arrest of the students is a performative hierarchizing mechanism that constructs state power through the body of the arrested. In other words, the arrest of students is a performance, theatrical if I may, for the public as well as for the students themselves. In scene one, we can consider the extraordinary crowd of vehicles and special forces as a spectacle of power. The reaction of the state is disproportionate according to almost anyone as Anıl recalls his arrest:

“While going towards the car, I asked, ‘Are you going to handcuff me’. He said, ‘No, not necessary. You are not resisting’. In the meantime, one helicopter is flying. There is one akrep in front of the dorms. We are going towards the women’s dormitory, and there is one more akrep there. There is even one more there; in total, there were three akreps, special forces everywhere. I mean, I remember more than one of them patrolling. I mean well... At that point, I asked the police whether this much preparation was necessary and whether the special forces was necessary. He answered as something like, ‘Don’t even ask, we too think it is unnecessary, but well’. Anyway, we got in the car and the kind one as I call him sat in the front passenger seat. One of them took the driver’s seat, and one of them sat beside me. The other one (kind one), turned to me as soon as he sat and said, ‘What did you do? Why are we taking you? You look like honest people.’ And passed me a cigarette.”⁶

⁶“arabaya doğru giderken kelepçe takmıcaz mısınız dedim yok ya mukavemet göstermiyorsun birşey olmaz dedi ama o sırada hani helikopter uçuyor bir tane akrep var yurtların önünde kadınların yurdunun olduğu yere doğru gidiyoruz o tarafta da bir tane akrep var hatta bir tane de orada totalde üç tane akrep vardı kampüste her tarafta özel hareket polisleri var yani ben birden fazlasını yürürken devriye gezermiş gibi hatırlıyorum hani çok şeydi o noktada şey sordum polise dönüp ya bu kadar hazırlığa ne gerek vardı özel hareketa ne gerek vardı dedim o da ya sorma bizce de gereksiz ama işte gibi bişey söyledi neyse bindik arabaya işte o daha nazik hani artık böyle de isimlendireyim o şeye bindi yolcu koltuğuna bindi birisi sürücü koltuğuna diğeri de yanıma bindi diğeri biner binmez zaten döndü arkasına böyle ya siz yapmışsınız ya sizi neden alıyoruz ki tertemiz insanlara benziyorsunuz gibi birşey dedi daha sonra çıkardı al bir tane daha sigara iç dedi sigara uzattı bana”

The disproportionate reaction of the police through the spectacle of the police vehicles and special forces is not the only mode of performance. In scene 2, arrest becomes a way of marking the students inside the campus. The police expand the boundaries of the state by dragging, touching, and arresting the very bodies of the students. The arrest is performative and theatrical because it marks the bodies of the students who were harshly dragged as criminals, terrorists, dissidents. The very act of the arrest is an attempt to make the students inhabit these very categories. Aggressiveness and vulgarity of the police officers are common stylistic registers that aim to inscribe “guilt” and “indecent” to the bodies of the arrested, as I argued above, following Fassin. Therefore, the performance of the arrest is not only a performance for the bystanders in a literal sense, as a display of power and creating a culture of fear, but also, a subtle attempt to coincide the categories with the positions of the students by literally positioning them in the role of arrested.

Similar to Scene 1, in Scene 2, the students often emphasized their own shock due to the disproportionate, the absurd yet harsh performance of police officials during the arrest. For example, Abdullah, whom I introduced earlier, neither expected to be taken into custody nor imagined any reason for this. This was his first experience of arrest, which took place due to their attempted press release for their friends who were taken earlier from dormitories. His resistance about which we laugh later was a result of irrationality as well as the absurdity of the arrest. His resistance was not intentional in the sense of escaping arrest, but rather it was a reaction to the absurdity as well as irrationality of the arrest. The reason why we laugh after is that the expectation of “reason” from the police officers or the state, in general, is absurd in itself.

Moreover, any kind of opposition can be a reason for the arrest, even a kind one. For instance, Gül was taken into custody because she politely asked police officers to stop dragging Ömer through the stairs and let him go even though she did not know him at that time. Gül recalls;

“I went towards the door when I saw the arrest. In the stairs around the door, they were dragging someone, I mean a police officer. Then, while I was saying to him to something like, ‘what are you doing? This a school, you cannot do something like that’, they decided to take me too and well, I think it is absurd. Everyone should have reacted this way. Everyone should not have let anyone to be taken because it is a school. I mean, imagine someone is being attacked, does not anyone help, they do but when police attacks, they cannot because police are there state... Anyway, they decided to take me, but I did not acknowledge it at all like how? me? Then, one police took my arm and immediately made

me fall. This was a tactic, making look like I'm resisting to drag me. If he would have taken my arm, I was going to walk anyway.”⁷

The performance of the arrest also includes particular tactics and strategies. Making students fall and dragging them were common tactics of police officers, as Gül mentioned. Making it look like they are resisting is ground for justification to behave harshly and violently. On the other hand, resistance to the police can also be a political action with intentionality. For example, Onur fought back and laid down on the floor not to be taken by the police who had to drag him. He explained:

“I resisted a little while being taken from the campus because I thought we would be mistreated in the car, so if we would, it is better that some part of the students could see that here. Since they usually do not do anything when it is visible, and then, after they isolate you, they make threats and torture you. I made their job difficult.”⁸

Moreover, these different strategies and methods of the arrest prove unwritten and informal rules for the process of the arrest. The performance of the arrest depends on the spatial settings. This conscious reaction above to the arrest attempts of police officers indicates the spatial formation of the arrest. According to several students, there is a stark contrast between police officers' attitudes inside and outside the campus. Police officers consciously avoided showing any sign of torture and physical violence in the university campus boundaries, whereas they clearly did not hesitate to use violence in front of the bus or in the parking lot. In another arrest, Murat also points out the striking change in the behavior of the police officers. He was taken into custody from a student bus, which was going to the other campus. He recalls:

“I mean normally nothing happened until I was taken to the civilian

⁷“ben böyle şeye doğru gittim o gözaltıları görünce kapıya doğru gittim kapının ordaki merdivenlerde birini sürüklüyorlardı yani bir polis sonra ben de ona işte napıyorsunuz burası okul böyle yapamazsınız bilmem ne gibi birşeyler derken beni de almaya karar verdiler ve mesela şimdi absürt bence herkesin böyle tepki vermesi gerekiyordu ve herkesin hiç kimseyi aldırması gerekiyordu çünkü okul orası ve yani şurada birisine saldırdıklarını düşün kimse müdahale etmez mi eder ama polis saldırısı edemiyorlar işte çünkü polis orada devlet neyse sonra beni de almaya karar verdiler hiç üstüme alınmadım falan nasıl beni mi diye sonra polis işte bi tanesi koluma girdi ve direkt yere düşürdü bu da bir taktikmiş direniyomuş gibi seni gösterip sürüklemek için koluma girse yürücektim yani zaten”

⁸“ben biraz direndim şeyde gözaltına alırlarken kampüsten çünkü şey diye düşündüm hani arabada muhtemelen kötü muameleye maruz kalacağız hani kalacaksak hani okulun bir kısmının onu burada görmesi daha iyi düşündüm çünkü genelde şey yapıyorlar o şey süresince görünür olduğu sürece birşey yapmayıp ondan sonra seni tecrit ettikten sonra tehdit, işkence yapıyorlar biraz zorlaştırdım işlerini polislerin”

police car. I mean, outside, they behaved accordingly to presented police perception. Like using “you” and “I” in a formal way, like showing his own identity; “I’m this, would you come with me, please”. As soon as we got into the car, he shows his true face, after that, swearing, assaulting and meaningless threats... ”⁹

According to Talal Asad,

“Modern dedication to eliminating pain and suffering often conflicts with other commitments and values: the right of individuals to choose, and the duty of the state to maintain its interest.” (Asad 1996, 1082)

Therefore, he argues that although strategies of torture, and the legitimization of certain kind of violence change historically over time, it continues to exist in secrecy (Asad 1996). Influenced by Foucault, he also argues that the secrecy is the very aspect of policing in a modern sense as specific disciplinary knowledge depends upon its secrecy. The question around the secrecy and visibility of violence for whom, around who, in what conditions are necessary to understand the particular workings of state violence on certain subjects with different justifications and legitimizations.

On the other hand, in Scene 3, the arrest is more discrete than the others, but it is still performance. All the actions of the police officer in Scene 3 are performative and strategically theatrical. The police consciously behave politely and shows no sinister intention, especially in public. First, he behaves in a strategically polite and nonsuspicious manner until he takes Ahmet to the parking lot. After that, the performance changes its color when the police officer displays aggressiveness, vulgarity, and scorn. Meaningless orders are an attempt to dominate the body of the student and hierarchizing performance between the police as “superior” and the students as “inferior”.

The public arrest of the students has several consequences. Arrest not only attempts to criminalize and marginalize the students in the eyes of the bystanders by the very act of the arrest, but it also attempts to criminalize and marginalize them in their own perception. The days following days their release, some of the students mentioned their reluctance to attend school. They consciously chose not to come to school due to fear of arrest. One of them explained his reluctance to come as being

⁹“yani şöyle normalde beni ben sivil arabasına bindirene kadar şey olmadı yani bildiğin dışarda bizim yani bize sunulan polis algısındaki gibi davrandılar işte sizli bizli konuşmalar işte kendi kimliğini gösteriyor atıyorum ben şuyum benimle gelir misin lütfen falan bir anda arabanın içine girdiğin anda asıl yüzünü gösteriyor bir anda işte küfürlü konuşmalar hakaret etmeler işte altı boş tehdit etmeler falan”

ashamed because of his being harshly dragged in front of many people, including his friends. Gül explains:

“the most disgusting thing was that you do not know me at all, you do not know what kind of person I am, and you think that you have a right to touch me and attack me. For example, one of the cops asked me, “Do your parents know? Do your parents know you are like this?”. Like what? What do you know about me? I mean, like a terrorist, I think I am not a terrorist.”¹⁰

The accusation of terrorism has several implications. Overall, controlling the bodies of the students is an attempt to realize the state power on students’ bodies. The arrest is a ritual manufacturing state power by capturing the body of the students. This ritual is a spatially constructed performance aiming to produce fear for everyone while protecting an “ideal image” for the police officers. In other words, it is a way to create fear and terror by arresting the bodies of the students. Police are not bold enough to be visibly violent, but they do not hesitate to display disproportionate violence.

¹⁰“en iğrenç hissettiğim şey de şuydu beni hiç tanımiyosunuz nasıl birisi olduğumu hiç bilmiyorsunuz bana dokunmaya hakkınız olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz ve bana saldırabiliyorsunuz bir tane polis şey dedi mesela ailen biliyor mu ailen böyle olduğunu biliyor mu nasıl olduğunu sen benim hakkımda ne biliyorsun ki yani işte böyle terörist olduğunu ben terörist değilim bence”

3. IN THE POLICE CAR

“Do you think your mother would find you? Who would know you were taken into custody? Who would search for you?”

Onur

“I did not tell the details. I do not remember. It would create hate inside me. I do not want to possess that hate. Saying “violence” is enough.”

Gül

I met Onur, one of the seven students taken from the protest, in front of the famous eagle statue in Beşiktaş. When he invited me to his house for the interview, I accepted his offer. It was a hot, crowded day. We arrived at a small, duplex, old house after a relatively silent and tiring walk. His roommate was sleeping downstairs while we claimed the narrow stairs to the balcony. We took the small table out to the balcony accompanied by two chairs. Resting in the breeze created a comfortable as well as a silent environment. He was 26 years old, rather old for a freshman, studying social sciences. He would later tell me, in our second interview, that he did not plan to go to college for a few years after high school. He was an anarchist socialist, arrested many times during protests but he emphasized; “I did not experience something like this before” referring to the extreme violence during the arrest. Although he was arrested before and exposed to police violence especially in the police car, he never has been spent eight hours in the police car. After he had resisted during the arrest as I mentioned in Chapter 2, the police officers forcefully took him to the police car in the parking lot. He remembers that as soon as they exited the campus door the police started to kick him and make threats. He recalls them saying:

“Do you think your mother would find you? Who would know you were

taken into the custody? Who would search for you?”¹

He remembers thinking this arrest as “ugly” even before they arrived at the police bus. After they threw him into the car like others, the violence immediately began. At least three police officers were kicking and swearing at each of them. He recalls:

“First, the officers from the security department took us into the custody. Their chief got into the car and said while pointing at me that ‘fuck the shit out of him I will sign his report’. Then he said: ‘you don’t do this, bring the special forces.’”²

3.1 Violence and Interrogation

Most of the students except a few faced violence and interrogation in the police car after they got arrested from various places in various times as I mentioned in Chapter 1. In this chapter, I focus on students’ transportation in the police car where they were tortured and interrogated. I consider the police car as a “space of exception” where violence is normalized, systematized, and legitimized. I argue that violence is an integral part of othering or marginalizing students. While Arjun Appadurai is discussing the dehumanization of Jews in Nazi Germany, he argues that the very act of large-scale murder is providing self-fulfilling proof of the ideological arguments about the inferiority of the victim (Appadurai 2006, 56). This shows that the practice of torture/violence/ abuse on the bodies of the political prisoner is not the afterward of foundations of categories of terrorist/communist/traitor consequently subhuman who is not worthy of human rights or dignity, it is a simultaneous and interrelated existence of both the categories and violence. Therefore, degrading treatment/torture is not the result of exclusion or oppression, but it is the very practice, foundation of these exclusion.

Nevertheless, the body of the political prisoner is never neutral for the state as the

¹“Seni annen bulacak mı sanıyorsun? Senin gözüne alındığından kimin haberi olacak? Peşine kim düşecek?”

²“Önce güvenlik şube vardı bizi gözüne alan. Onların amiri arabaya bindi işte sonra beni göstererek şey dedi: bunun anasını sikin dedi raporunu ben imzalıcım dedi. Sonra da şey dedi siz yapmayın dedi buraya çekin getirin dedi. Çünkü güvenlikler o ekip daha sonra bizim okulda bulundular.”

body is marked with ethnic and sexual meanings (Aretxaga 1997, 2001). Hence, the rationalities of state violence change according to the students' perceived ethnicity, gender, class and sexuality. State violence is never fixed, concrete and neutral, it is embodied in the particular social and historical conditions. In this chapter, I will discuss the different treatments of police officers of various students as well as gendered aspects of the police violence in the police car.

Seven students including Onur who were arrested after their attempt to make a press statement on campus, were severely tortured in the police car for eight hours. According to the students, they were patrolled around the city to find an available police station while waiting to hear from the prosecutor whether to officially arrest them or not. In the meantime, the police car was lost on the way while trying to find an available police station for the students. Students were taken to hospital to get medical report and were not accepted by one police station which did not have space for new arrestees. Finally, after eight hours, they arrived at a police station where they got released after making testimonies. Firstly, I depict these eight hours in the police car.

Violence on the body has been extensively theorized as a disciplinary mechanism and display of fictionalized power (Feldman 1991; Foucault 1979; Scarry 1987). Since Foucault, the "body" has been acknowledged to be a deployment of modern power which he coined as "biopower". In other words, the "human body" becomes a central mediation of modern power which aims to discipline, normalize or segregate through the production of submissive subjectivities (Foucault 1979). According to Foucault's narrative, the shift from sovereign power to biopower marks a change in the trend of punishment. As he famously argued in "Discipline and Punish", modern strategies of punishment which aims for efficiency and productivity at a maximum level intend to produce docile bodies through more subtle regimes of surveillance, deprivation of basic needs or rights (Foucault 1979). Torture, he argued, had been started to be less visible besides the disappearance of public spectacle of punishments. He admitted that torture never disappeared, but was gradually replaced with more efficient, rationalized tools of punishment (Foucault 1979, 34-35). However, torture is still a common tool for state violence, so the human body is a site of the most brutal domination especially when this technology of normalization breaks down. Either because subjects refuse to fit dominant subjectivities or because punishment and violence become excessive and dramatic to the extent that it betrays its own rationalities and justifications, technologies of normalization fail to produce docile bodies as some studies have already shown (Aretxaga 1997). The "body", in this respect, is the central material of the power as Foucault argued, and torture is still a well used tactic of dominance.

In her brilliant literary study of torture, Elaine Scarry argues that torture converts bodily pain into imaginary “insignia” of power. She states; “The motive of the torture is to a large extent the equivalent... of the fictionalized power.” (Scarry 1987) Following Scarry, Allen Feldman discusses political violence in the context of Northern Ireland where he argues:

“The performance of torture does not apply power; rather it manufactures it from the ‘raw’ ingredient of captive’s body. The surface of the body is the stage where the state is made to appear as an effective material force.”(Feldman 1991, 115)

Here, I argue that these perspectives of violence are essential, yet limited to understand the phantasmatic arbitrariness or even absurdness of the police violence in the car. Begona Aretxaga emphasizes the importance of unconscious fantasies, desire, sexuality and fear in the operation of power and argues that punishment cannot be understood only in terms of rationality (Aretxaga 2001). I will focus on the gendered violence in the last section of this chapter, but I also argue that the workings of violence are very much linked to the discourses of perpetrators. In Foucault’s and Scarry’s work, we cannot see the perpetrators as if violence was deployed with bodiless and selfless pair of hands. However, in the narratives of students, violence is embedded in the speeches, insults, conversations of police officers whose bodies are already invested in various ethnic, gendered and political meanings.

When the police managed to drag the seven students out of the campus to the police bus, the violence immediately began. The police bus was parked in the parking lot across the campus since they forcefully arrested seven students. As soon as they stepped outside the campus, the officers who were holding them started to hit their heads and kick them. While Deniz was describing the process of events, when she had arrived at the door of the bus, the officers pretended to throw her into the bus a couple of times. After Zeynep was brought in front of the bus, the officers knocked each other’s heads and throw them to the bus. At this point, an officer at the steps of the bus kicked Deniz in her head, and her glasses broke. All of them were forced to sit alone surrounded by police in the medium police bus. They were handcuffed from their back tightly and forced to keep their head below, so neither could they protect themselves from impacts nor see each other.

As I interviewed all of them, there were similar anecdotes in their narratives. My first interviewee was 22 year old Yağmur who was a politically active student as a leftist since high school. She was not taken into custody ever before this incident. I was

not going to learn about her working class and conservative parents who live outside Istanbul and her brother whom she has been estranged due to political divisions until our second interview. Later, she also told me that unlike her mother, her father and brother did not know anything about her arrest or her political activities in general. Yağmur remembers:

“After the police had gathered seven of us, there were three female special forces and the rest of them were civilian police officers. They started to hit us, and they were swearing constantly. On one side, first, our identity cards are taken, and they started to shoot videos of us while pulling our hair. They were taking our video by saying things like; ‘tomorrow, you will all be on the news. Shoot them well.’ One month later, we will see their corpses in the mountains .”³

The police officers constantly referred to the students as “terrorists” and “traitors” for eight hours torture in the police car as Yagmur mentioned. The police slapped or kicked the students while constantly asking; “Did you insult our martyrs?”⁴ Students similarly mentioned an incident during the arrest; before they were taken to the hospital, one female officer severely slapped each student two times while the other two female officer was holding the students. The officer was asking while slapping; “Are you going to insult our martyrs?” This discourse shows how police officers materialize state power thorough the arrest while the bodies of the students were seen as symbols of terrorism for the police as I also mentioned in Chapter 1. The bodies of the students were embodiments of “terrorist act” which justifies violence in the eyes of police officers. Feldman states;

“The state (m)others bodies in order to engender itself. The production of bodies – political subjects – is the self-production of the state. The rooms of torture are like Ceausescu’s endless maze of underground tunnels, a uterine space where the state considers and ensures its reproduction.”(Feldman 1991, 115)

In a similar vein, taking pictures of the students while they were handcuffed from their back aims to reproduce state power by captivating the body of the supposed

³“Yedimizi de araca topladıktan sonra üç tane çevik kadın vardı geri kalanlar sivil polislerdi onlar işte bizi darp etmeye başladılar zaten sürekli küfür de ediyorlardı bir yandan mı işte ilk önce kimliklerimiz toplandı ve böyle saçımızdan tutup videoya çekmeye başladılar işte yarın hepiniz haberlere çıkacaksınız işte bunları iyi çek işte bir ay sonra leşlerini dağda görürüz falan diye o şekilde videomuzu çektiler.”

⁴“Şehitlerimize hakaret mi ettiniz?”

terrorist both materially and symbolically. Hence, holding a camera in front of the detainees is another strategy of violence and domination since there is an obvious hierarchy between the spectator and those who are viewed especially while in custody and handcuffed from the back. Captioning of their faces is an attempt to freeze the moment of “victimization” and bring shame to the students by exposing their faces as captivated “criminals”. According to Feldman who discusses Abu Ghraib photos of torture with 9/11,

“Abu Ghraib abuse was a sacrificial manipulation and reconstruction of the prisoners as political specimens and as pacified images of interdicted threat, rendered amenable to political circulation, at least among the occupation forces” (Feldman 2005, 221)

Similarly, taking pictures of dissident students as passivized symbolically meant to passivize all “Others”, terrorists, traitors and all dissidents.

On the other hand, several other students also mentioned extreme violence directed to Onur and how the police threatened him with “forced disappearance”. Clearly, Onur’s body is seen as a symbol of “terrorism” for the police. In addition, the police actively rearticulate history of state violence in Turkey by reminding the students of the forced disappearances in 1990s and aiming to create fear. The strategic threat of disappearance also shows conscious usage of physical violence or threat of violence by the police. Forced disappearances and torture were widely used in the 1980s and 1990s after the 1980 coup and systematized against leftist movements and Kurdish movement (Can 2016). There is an ongoing collective memory and postmemory of state violence in Turkey for those who identify themselves either with perpetrators or victims. I consider Macarena Gomez-Barris’s concept of the “afterlife” of political violence useful to understand continuums and changes of political violence, and also the strategies of appropriating this history for both perpetrators and victims. She defines the afterlife of political violence as:

“The continuing and persistent symbolic and material effects of the original event of violence on people’s daily lives, their social and psychic identification, and their ongoing wrestling with the past and present.” (Gómez-Barris 2009, 6)

The current state violence, in that sense, cannot be independent from the history and the memory of the state violence in Turkey. Both parties might embody this

collective memory for different purposes. Whereas police officers strategically use the violent history as a future possibility in which students might be killed without any trace of evidence, one of the students draws attention to the same history of state violence to show the reality of unceasing struggle despite the extreme levels of violence. Zeynep explains how she wasn't surprised by the torture:

"This is not the first-time police penetrates into the university in this country. People die all the time. I mean what is being arrested three to five months is compared to this. It (the state) forgets these dynamics. Otherwise, the struggle would have been ended fifty years ago. I mean when Deniz was executed, the struggle would have been over. It doesn't end. Eventually, we didn't experience it, but there is a collective memory; the memory of military coup, torture vs. We are familiar with those. Blindfold; it is not something we are not familiar. I wasn't surprised at all. It could happen. I mean I didn't expect it, but I wasn't surprised. All of these are in our collective memory."⁵

Zeynep is coming from a rightist conservative family with whom she barely communicates. She is a 26 years old child of a single mother. She became politically active in university and she defines herself as a Marxist and socialist. This is not the first time she was arrested, yet she also emphasized the excessiveness of the violence in the police car. She is one of the seven students taken from the campus. Her reference to past leftist struggles can be considered as "nostalgia" for a never lived past (D'Orsi 2018). The history of violence and resistance is embodied in the narratives and social grammars of the students in various ways.

On the other hand, the violence was so extreme that Onur vividly remembers feeling numb around his neck and warned them not to hit his head. He informed me that the police usually do not hit the head, they hit in a way not to make any bruises or damage. Because he was beaten extremely, his nose was broken, and his eardrum punctured. When they arrived at the hospital for the medical report, he insisted to get a torture report, so he was transported to another hospital. On the way, the police officers insistently tried to converse with him. Onur stated:

⁵"Bu ülkede ilk defa üniversiteye polis girmiyor ki. İnsanlar sürekli ölüyor zaten. Alt tarafı üç beş ay tutuklanmak nedir ki yani. Böyle dinamiklerin olduğunu unutuyor. Yoksa bu ülkede mücadele biteli elli yıl olurdu. Yani denizler asıldığında mücadele biterdi. Bitmiyor demek ki yani. Sonuçta tamam biz yaşamadık ama toplumsal hafıza diye bir şey var askeri darbenin hafızası var insanlarda işkenceler bilmem neler. Aşına olmadığımız şeyler değil. Gözbağı. Aşına olmadığımız bir şey değil ki. Hiç şaşırmadım yani. Olabilirdi. Hani beklemiyordum ama çok da şaşırmadım. Bunlar toplumsal olarak bizim hafızamıza var olan şeyler."

“The police officers who had taken me from one hospital to another also said the same thing. Our job is not to beat you. We are taking you into the custody. When we took you to the car, it is the special forces’ responsibility, and the security department doesn’t take any responsibility. In fact, they were swearing to the special forces because I had many bruises and swellings in my face. They were saying; ‘is this the way to beat, these are animals, when people bring up cases, we go into trial’.”⁶

The state is in no way homogeneous and coherent in practicing violence. State institutions have their own rationalities which are practiced by different agents in various ways. Apparently, there is a division of labor between different segments of the police forces. Although police forces use violence as a strategy in general, torture is mainly in the jurisdiction of the special forces. There might be a couple of reasons for this division of labor. Probably, it is hard to identify perpetrators in the special forces because they are not included in arrest reports as responsible officers. This makes it possible to deny responsibility in the cases of torture.

Extreme torture in the police bus was a domain of same old state power which reproduces itself through the body of the tortured. However, violence could be arbitrary, random, meaningless or even cowardly instead of rational, calculated or efficient. “At the local level it becomes difficult to experience the state as an ontologically coherent entity; what one confronts instead is much more discrete and fragmentary.” (Gupta 1995, 384), so the fragmentary and incoherent nature of the state makes it necessary to pursue the spatiality of the state. Therefore, the question of spatially, practices of violence concerning secrecy and openness of the violence in whose presences are indispensable to understand the everyday practices of the state.

In her brilliant theoretization of torture, Elaine Scarry argues that the primary physical act, the infliction of pain and the primary verbal act, interrogation are two fundamental parts of torture (Scarry 1987). According to her, understanding interrogation as a motive or justification for violence would be a mistaken logic since interrogation itself is a kind of violence since “the question, whatever its content, is an act of wounding, the answer, whatever its content, is a scream.” (Scarry 1987, 47). From this view, interrogation is not necessarily motivated by extracting information from detainees, but it is an indispensable part of torture. All the students referred to how police officers were constantly talking and asking question even when they knew the answers. The students described to me the conversations of police officers

⁶“Gözaltı süresince beni hastaneden hastaneye taşıyan polisler de aynı şeyi söyledi. Bizim işimiz size dövmek değil. Biz sizi gözaltına alıyoruz. Arabaya bıraktıktan sonra onun sorumluluğu çeviklerde ve çevikler ne yapıyorsa yapsın güvenlik şube bunu üstüne almıyor. Hatta işte çevik kuvvetlere benim çünkü benim işte yüzümde baya morluk vardı şişmişti. Beni döven çevik kuvvetlere küfrediyorlardı. Böyle dövülür mü. Bunlar hayvan. Dava açılınca mahkemeye biz çıkıyoruz.”

such as:

“They were saying things like ‘this is a private university’. Then, when one of our friends told them that this is a public university, they started to say things like ‘Are you doing terrorist activities with state money.’”⁷

Yağmur and other students mentioned that police officers firstly beat the students as rich, private university students. When they learned this was a public university, they continued to hit to students for “terrorist activities with state money”. Yağmur continued:

“One of their boyfriends was from the special forces. For example, they were talking on the phone; ‘we have been beating them for two days. It is like antidepressant. I relaxed anyway. 1st of May is coming, we will beat them on 1st of May.’”⁸

Speeches of police officers in the police car are extremely significant not because they are rationally constructed, but because they draw attention to affective space of violence which was deployed by police with vengeance and hatred. While driving to the hospital for the medical report, Onur narrated:

“In fact, they consciously want to talk to you, to break you. They want to extract information even if they already know. They want to make you talk. They want to communicate with you somehow. Ideal arrest is that. They are the ones who have power over you. They handcuff you. They have just beat the shit out of you. Then, they expect you to talk to them as if they are normal people. They talk to you in that way.”⁹

The threats are also a significant part of the interrogation, Murat states:

⁷“burası özel üniversite gibi şeyler söylüyorlardı sonra bir arkadaşımız devlet üniversitesi olduğunu söylediğinde bu sefer de devletin verdiği parayla teröristlik mi yapıyorsunuz gibi şeyler söylemeye başladılar”

⁸“bir tanesinin sevgilisi özel harekatçıydı mesela telefonda onunla konuşup işte iki gündür bunları dövüyoruz antidepresan gibi oldu çok stres attım zaten 1 mayıs da geliyor 1 mayısda da bunları döviziz.”

⁹“Esasında kontrollü bilerek seninle konuşmak seninle şey yapmak çözmek için yapılan bir şey. Senden bilgi almak istiyorlar bilseler bile. Seni konuşturmak istiyorlar. Seninle bir şekilde iletişim kurmak istiyor. İdeal gözüktü o. Sana bir şekilde güç sahibi olan o ve senin üstünde iktidarı var. Kelepçe takmış sana. Az önce ağzını burununu kırmış. Seninle ondan sonra onunla normal bir insanmış gibi konuşmanı bekliyor. Seninle öyle konuşuyor”

“We will not let you study. Your life is over. After this, you will spend your years in prison. We will reach your family and we will not let them work, they will not find any job, they will not be able to earn their bread. We will find your brother; we will not let him to study either. Things like this, things I they cannot do actually. When I saw that these were attempts to frustrate with any excuses, they stopped being believable, but there were insults and psychical and psychological violence in various levels.”¹⁰

In addition, different bodies of the dissidents might get different treatments from the police. For example, Bilge, a 22 years old engineering student was arrested in front of the campus yet did not experience physical violence during his arrest. He recalls his process of arrest:

“He tried to twist my arm and control me physically. I interpret this as an attempt to dominate psychologically and as a way to suppress and to subordinate, but they do not have a right as such. They have a right to use violence to those resisting the arrest rather they have the right to use force not violence, but I mean when I expressed that I did not resist, maybe because I was a bit harsh, I managed to deal with them. However, unfortunately, this is so random because earlier, another friend had been abused. I do not think he was resisting either, but he was beaten.”¹¹

When I asked him how he convinced police not to be violent, he replied:

“I mean I told them that I have health issues, so they cannot handcuff me from my back because they do not have the right to do so and I insisted to them to unhandcuff me. I managed to make them accept somehow. I mean I might have said that my father is a doctor and I might have been threatening them with this or that; I might have been

¹⁰“işte seni okutmayacağız var işte senin hayatın bitti bundan sonra sen yıllarını içeride geçireceksin işte senin ailene ulaşacağız ailenin çalışmasına izin vermeyeceğiz işte hiçbir yerde iş bulamayacaklar işte ekmeğini kazanamacaklar işte kardeşini bulacağız onun da okumasına izin vermeyeceğiz böyle şeyler yani yapabilecekleri şeyler değil aslında herhangi bir bahaneyle ya tamamen karşıdaki insanı yıldırmaya yönelik zaten o kadar şey olduğunu görünce de yani abarttıklarını görünce de inanılacak tarafı kalmadı zaten ama hani hakaret oluyor yani değişen ölçülerde fiziksel şiddet oluyor psikolojik şiddet oluyor.”

¹¹“şöyle kolumu bükmeye ve yani fiziksel kontrolü altına almaya çalıştı bunu şu şekilde yorumluyorum psikolojik baskı altına almaya çalıştı ve bir çeşit sindirme ve itaat ettirme yöntemi olarak bunu kullanmaya çalıştıklarını düşünüyorum ancak böyle bir hakları yok şu hakları var gözaltına alınmaya direnen kişiye şiddet uygulayabilir daha doğrusu zor kullanabiliyorlar şiddet uygulamak da değil ama yani direnmediğimi ifade edince bundan ve belki biraz da şey ben de sert olunca bir şekilde şey bunun üstesinden gelebildim ama yani maalesef çok keyfi çünkü daha öncesinde çok benzeri diğer arkadaş yani direndiğini sanmıyorum ancak şey darp edilmişti”

threatening them with a lawsuit if this causes a health problem.”¹²

Clearly, he managed to protect himself from police violence by threatening them with a lawsuit. However, his success is also related to his class and status. Emre also did not face torture neither in the police car nor in custody. He states:

“The police who arrested me was like so polite very polite... I said something. I said by the way thank you very much for not being tortured. Really thank you very much for not deploying any kind of violence.”¹³

3.2 Space of Exception

In his well-known investigation on the state of exception, Agamben considers the state of exception as both inside and outside the law (Agamben and Attell 2005). Following Walter Benjamin (1978) and Carl Schmitt (1922), he argues the state of exception is significant to understand sovereign power which could resort to boundless state of exception (Agamben and Attell 2005). Agamben states:

“In truth, the state of exception is neither external nor internal to the juridical order, and the problem of defining it concerns precisely a threshold, or a zone of indifference, where inside and outside do not exclude each other but rather blur with each other.” (Agamben and Attell 2005, 23).

Hence, the state of exception, for Agamben, provides an understanding of sovereignty that is both inside and the outside of the law. The state of exception, in this respect, is a way of making the exception the norm. The latest state of exception in Turkey

¹²“yani sađlık sorunum olduđunu ve yani bu ters kelepçe uygulamasını yapamıcađlarını yani bunun hakları olmadıđını söyledim ve çözmeleri konusunda ısrarcı oldum bir şekilde kabul ettirebildim yani belki şey söylemiş olabilirim babamın doktor olduđunu ve hani bunun da yani şunla tehdit etmiş olabilirim onları bu yaptıklarının herhangi bir sađlık sorunu açması halinde davacı olacađını söylemiş olabilirim”

¹³“beni şey yapan polis yakalayan polis çok böyle şeydi işte çok o da çok kibar çok nazik ben şey dedim bu arada dedim çok teşekkürler yani herhangi bir işkenceye uğramadıđım için çok teşekkür ediyorum size gerçekten dedim ya herhangi bir şiddet uygulamadıđınız için falan filan”

was declared after the 15th July 2016 coup d'état attempt and lasted two years until 18th July 2018. Turkey had been ruled by KHKs (the Turkish abbreviation of *kanun hukmunde kararname*, “decree with the force of law”) which is declared by the president without the parliament’s approval. During state of emergency rule, many people lost their jobs in the bureaucracy, police force, academic institutions and press while many civil organizations as well as media institutions were shut down (Erensü and Alemdaroğlu 2018). In addition, many freedoms such as the right to speak or protest were curbed. Since the students had been arrested during the state of emergency, the concept of the state of exception is indispensable to understand the normalization and regulation of the exceptions such as handcuffing from the back, strip searching, intrusion of police officers in medical controls, and intense torture in police cars. We cannot perceive these renormalizations and relegitimizations only as stretching the rules, but rather constant negotiation of attempting to normalize violence.

Walter Benjamin argues that the violent nature of law manifests itself through police violence whose power is formless with a ghostly presence in “civilized” states (Benjamin et al. 1978). Hence, police violence reveals something rotten in law and state and is closely linked to the Foucauldian perspective about institutional rationalities of law, and medicine in times of peace and violence. In that sense, practices of police violence are crucial for tracing the violent nature of both state which produces and reproduces its own rationalities, order, exceptions and denial regimes. Following Agamben and Benjamin, I argue that violence in the police car creates a space of exception where the exception becomes the norm in the conditions of exceptional rule in Turkey. All the students I interviewed except a few were faced with violence and interrogation in the police car rather than police stations or public spaces. Hence, the police car creates a “lacuna”, “in between space” where violence becomes normalized, legitimized and even institutionalized. In this sense, the police car is a perfect material environment where there is no surveillance or witnesses unlike police stations or public places. I believe students’ narratives of police car are invaluable to understand the technologies and institutional rationalities of police violence in Turkey even though these narratives were driven from sole experiences. On the other hand, my argument differs from Agamben in the sense that state violence had never become an exception in Turkey although its rationalities or techniques changed through time and space. State violence has a long story in Turkey from the early days of the consolidation of power based on Sunni-Turkish identity (Yeğen 2004) to the 1980 coup d'état which consisted of systematic manifestation of torture, enforced disappearances, and extra judicial killings against leftist groups (Can 2016). Scholars have argued that state violence has become the means of protecting

public order and security against the “internal enemies” which consist of different ethnoreligious groups (Berksoy 2010; Yonucu 2018*a,b*). After the 2000s, it has been argued that classical forms of torture in custody and prisons were replaced with relatively less lethal forms violence such as tear gas, pepper gas, stun gas, and plastic bullets which are experienced collectively in the public sphere rather than police stations (Can 2016). Yet, especially with the 15th july military coup attempt, there has been an increase in human rights violations including torture in the custody.

As the case of university students show, replacement between different techniques of torture does not adequately explain the simultaneous workings of different techniques of torture which has its local practices for different populations in different time and spaces. This is not to say that the state uses the same technologies of violence in the same manner, but it is a rather to draw attention to the historical continuum which legitimized different kinds of violence in different time and spaces for different subjects. We can pursue the continuity and breaks in the history of state violence by looking closely at the arrest of the students. I have no intention to generalize their conditions of arrest, but I believe the topography of their arrest could yield an understanding of institutional rationalities and everyday conditions of state violence in Turkey.

3.3 Police

Davut was one of the few Kurdish students I interviewed. He introduced himself as a child of “a middle-class family which is a mixture of brown Turkishness and white Kurdishness”. He is from Diyarbakır. When I asked about his parents, he replied:

“my mother is a conservative housewife. My father was a civil servant in the state hydraulic works. No, I will not say hydraulic works. My father is retired police.”¹⁴

I noticed the hesitation in his voice. First, he did not want to say his father’s job, but then, he changed his mind. I recalled, before the interview, he warned me about the things he could not say, things he must “filter”. This is the first time I clearly

¹⁴“Annem ev hanımı muhafazakar babam da işte devlet memuruydu devlet su işleri yok su işlerinde demiyim babam da emekli polis”

saw the fear students rightly feel. His hesitation made me uncomfortable with my position and I repeated that he does not have to say anything he does not want.

“Are you terrorists? If you have nothing to do with studentship, why are you studying here? We did not go to Boğaziçi, but we love our country more than you. One more interesting thing like this, I will tell; things like defending the state, your education life is over. The president said this about you. He will do that. How could you dare to do this? Don't you love your country? How can you unite with terrorists? Like this, meantime, beating continues. In addition, first part is over, the beating part. Then, in the police car, the police started to converse in Kurdish with one another. That was very interesting.

S: What were they talking about?

D: I do not speak Kurdish, but this was very interesting for me. In a little while, they started to say; I wish you would have not done anything. Love your state. Your state is like this. It makes roads. It gives you opportunities. It serves you etc. Like I saw the exact father figure there like both beating and loving father figure which they (police) tried to create. On the other hand, you realize that the fact that while we are from Boğaziçi, their IQ is minus 20 is really bothering them. Besides this, you understand that they do not have any communication with women because they do like for example saying things like; ‘I saw you with women friends. Like, how can I say? How can I tell? Like they talk while dropping saliva, I cannot express this more politely than this. While talking about women, she was like this etc.’¹⁵

Anıl recalls:

“The most surprising thing for me is that these guys are the protectors of

¹⁵“İşte siz terörist misiniz? Öğrencilikle işiniz yoksa niye burada okuyorsunuz işte biz boğaziçinde okumadık ama sizden daha vatanımızı seviyoruz falan filan gibi böyle bir şey daha ilginç işte devleti savunma üzerine şeyler falan filan işte işte sizin eğitim hayatınız bitti işte cumhurbaşkanı sizin hakkınızda şöyle dedi böyle yapacak vesaire siz nasıl böyle birşeye cesaret edersiniz siz ülkenizi sevmiyor musunuz teröristlerle nasıl bir oluyorsunuz falan filan gibi böyle bir tabi bir yandan da dayak da devam ediyor vesaire onun haricinde ilk kısım bu şekilde bitti yani o dayak kısmı vesaire böyle sonra işte ekip arabasında onun haricinde de şey işte böyle bir ara polisler kendi aralarında kürtçe falan konuşmaya başladılar falan filan böyle o da baya enteresandı

S: ne konuşuyorlardı?

D: kürtçe bilmiyorum ondan dolayı böyle şeydi ama o da baya enteresan bir olaydı benim için falan filan bir süre sonra da böyle işte şey vermeye başladılar böyle ne diyeyim ya işte keşke yapmasaydınız falan filan böyle işte devletinizi sevin devletiniz şöyledir bak size böyle yol yapıyor yok size böyle imkan sağlıyor böyle hizmet veriyor falan filan gibi böyle tam bir baba figürünü orda gördüm böyle hem döven hem seven baba figürünü böyle kendi çaplarında yaratmaya çalıştıklarını vesaire böyle bir yandan da şeyi de görüyorsun işte senin boğaziçili olamn ve onların böyle ayküsünün -20 olması falan filan adamlara gerçekten dokunuyor yani böyle işte onun haricinde böyle herhangi bir şekilde kadınlarla iletişimlerinin de olmadığını da anlıyorsun falan çünkü böyle şey yapıyorlar işte mesela işte ben seni gördüm yanında kadın arkadaşların vardı falan filan deyip böyle şey yapıyorlar böyle ve şey yani nasıl diyeyim ona böyle şey böyle nasıl diyeyim nasıl anlatacım ya böyle şey ağızları sulanarak bahsediyorlar daha kibarca ifade edemicem de şey kadınlardan vesaire böyle bahsederken falan işte yanında şöyle biri vardı böyle biri vardı falan”

the nation and patriotic people. They are decent people. For example, they are swearing if they see someone who did not bend the mirror or parked properly. They constantly swear all the way, yelling, screaming. Or they say; ‘I will take his mirror, I will take his mirror’. They are like vagrants, like tramps especially the ones with bad attitudes or I do not know. When we were waiting at the red light, a woman was crossing the street and they say; ‘Look at the bitch, look how she is walking’. They were making statements like this, so it was clear that they were not decent people, they were vagrants but they were wondering around cocky with the pride of being police.”¹⁶

These narratives are informative to understand institutionalized violence and police culture in Turkey.

3.4 Gendered Violence and Morality

According to the students, seven special forces officers who tortured them for eight hours included three female and four male officers. All of the students I interviewed mentioned that although every police officer could hit every student occasionally, there was a division of labor between female and male officers according to gender. Students also mentioned how female officers were “happy” to arrest four females. Apparently, for the first time the number of female detainees outnumbered the males. Yağmur, Gül, Deniz and Zeynep, all of them emphasized the extreme violence which female officers deployed. For eight hours, according to them, female officers were more “violent” and “ruthless” than the men. They were “never tired” unlike the other officers. They were swearing constantly in a way students “never heard before”. As they spent a long time in the car, students witnessed their conversations and caught some information about the female officers. Yagmur describes them:

“Probably they were born in 1995 or 1994 but not even 1990. I mean they were so young. In any case, it has been one or two years since they

¹⁶“bana en şaşırtıcı gelen bu adamlar vatanın koruyucusu vatanperver insanlardır işte makul insanlar onlar atıyorum yanlış hani camını katlamamış bir adam ya da yamuk parketmiş biri araba gördüğünde küfrediyor sürekli yol boyunca sövüyor bağıriyo çağırıyo ya da işte alayım aynasını şunun dur abi alayım aynasını vesaire tavırları hani maganda gibiler çok serserilerdi özellikle kötü davrananlar hakketen çok serseriydi ya da ne bileyim akrşıdan karşıya kırmızı ışıktayız duruyoruz karşıdan karşıya bi kadın geçiyor etekli işte oo orospuya bak nasıl kıvırtarak yürüyor falan hani böyle söylemlerde bulunuyordu dolayısıyla da hani şey serseri tipler olduğu makul insanlar olmadıkları her hallerinden belliydi ama polis olmanın verdiği o milli gururla çok şeylerdi cocy bir şekilde geziyorlardı”

became police as I understood. I guess they were not graduated from police academy, but they changed their occupation from something else due to unemployment. Like they were teacher or something and later they changed because they thought they had to be police. Even one of the male officers teased with us after they got off the police bus saying; “because they (referring female police officers) are from lower ranks, they are trying to get vengeance. Don’t mind them.”¹⁷

From her narrative, we understand that there is a hierarchy between the ones who graduated from the police academy and the others who have not. Moreover, joining the force because of unemployment is one of the common anecdotes of the police officers. Hence, police officers were graduated from university mostly as teachers who are not able to find jobs in public schools. In this sense, students and police officers might share similar backgrounds despite current opposing positions.

According to the students, there was a clear hierarchy between male and female officers in the police bus. Female officers were addressing male officers as “abi” meaning older brother while male officers called women as “baci” meaning sisters. These terms of address are related not only to the hierarchy between men and women as well as older and younger in traditional gender norms in Turkey but also it is related to an obvious attempt to asexualize female officers. Calling them ‘sister’ is a way to emphasize their gender as a woman but denies their sexuality as a woman. Some students believe this hierarchy is the main reason for extreme violence and vengeance deployed by the female officers. According to them, the female officers try to “prove” something by endless violence and extreme insults.

One of the students, Deniz, was sexually harassed by one of the female officers. Deniz stated that, after some point, they stopped hitting her and “turn to sexual harassment”. One of the female officers started to play with her hair with a plastic handcuff, and the other two did the same thing after her. She describes:

“Then, she dropped the handcuffs and started to play with my hair with her hands. She started to play with my hair with her naked hands and touch my neck. I turned around and laughed. I said ‘I guess you liked my hair so much.’ She said ‘yes, so beautiful, curly’. I thought to myself ‘what’s next’. When they can’t see the reaction or weakness after

¹⁷“muhtemelen 95li 94lü ama 90 bile değillerdi yani çok gençlerdi zaten mesleğe başayalı muhtemeln bir iki yıl olmuştuz zaten onlar hani benim anladığım kadarıyla sanırım polis akademisi çıkışlı değil ama yani başka bir meslek yapıyorken hali hazırda iş bulamayıp daha sonradan öğretmen vesaire olup polis olmak durumunda kaldıklarını düşündükleri için o mesleği yapıyorlardı anladığım kadarıyla hatta erkek polislerden biri onlar indikten sonra bizimle epey dalga geçti onlar alt rütbede olduğu için böyle hınçlarını çıkarmaya çalışıyorlar siz onlara bakmayın”

violence, I guess they turn to sexual harassment. Then, she sat next to me again. She stuck her leg to my leg like a man manspreading in the subway. After that, I crossed my legs. She hit my leg and stuck her leg again to my leg and sat there for ten minutes.”¹⁸

In her brilliant study on political violence in Northern Ireland, Begona Aretxaga particularly focuses on the strip-searching of women in prison and questions the relationship between power and sexuality (Aretxaga 2001). She regards gender “not just a dimension of violence but as an intrinsic component of it, crucial to the understanding of its meanings, deployments, and ends.”(Aretxaga 2001). She argues:

“For the body of violence, the body of the state as well as the body of its subjects is not a neutral body, but a body already invested with the meanings of sexual difference and ethnic domination.”(Aretxaga 2001)

All of them referred to the incident in which a male student tried to lift his head, and a female officer yelled at him asking why he was looking at her. The male chief officer who heard that also started to swear at the student and said “You can’t look at my police sister. She is not like your whore friends.”¹⁹ Gender relations and moral norms around gender hierarchy play a role in the strategies of violence. Students were not only assaulted on the grounds of “terrorism” and “communism”, but they were also assaulted on the grounds of indignity and immorality coded according to traditional gender norms. For example, Yağmur was insulted by one of the female officers particularly because she was wearing a short skirt. She describes the situation as:

“There was class hatred and ideological hate too. For instance, the thing she said to me through my clothes... She said that she does not say not to wear short skirt, but anyways it does not look good on me. Probably, she thought that making me feel physically ugly would hurt

¹⁸*Sonra o çubuğu bırakıp elleriyle oynamaya başladılar. Çıplak eliyle saçımın oynamaya başladı sonra boynuma dokundu. Döndüm güldüm. Saçımı çok sevdim galiba yaptım. Evet çok güzel kıvrıcık kıvrıcık. Hadi bakalım diyorum böyle hani o şey galiba o şiddete istediği tepkiyi yıpratma etkisini göremedikleri zaman bir de bu tacize yöneliyorlar. Yani. sonrasında yine bahar geldi yanıma oturdu. Metroda erkekler böyle bacaklarını açar ya oturup aynen o şekilde bacaklarını açıp bacaklarını bacağıma yapıştırdı. Ben de aldım bacağıma bacak bacak üstüne attım. Vurdu indirdi ve yine yapıştırıp bacağıma sıkarak on dakika öyle oturdu.”

¹⁹“Sen benim polis bacıma bakamazsın. O senin orospu arkadaşlarına benzemez.”

me or something.”²⁰

When I asked Deniz about sexual harassment, she stated:

“These are strategies of psychological torture. I mean this is sexual harassment. Harming someone’s body by using physical force and violence is one thing, to keep touching someone’s body without consent or any possibility of resistance is another thing. It is as disturbing as much as physical violence. This is sexual harassment. I mean I realized in the process that we also need to change our perspective on torture within ourselves. We approach it as less violence or more violence. There is no less or more for both torture and sexual harassment. Of course, in this country, there had been many cases of torture, sexual abuse in custody. However, hierarchizing according to level of the torture makes an ambiguity about the fact that torture is a crime against humanity. Is it less or far enough torture? There is no such measurement. This is sexual abuse and torture.”²¹

When I asked Zeynep about the possible differences between female and male officers, she argued:

“I think female police officers are worse than males. They are the most unprogressive part of the society because they don’t have an awareness of identity what so ever. For example, male officers are more ideologically oriented. I mean they say that they are terrorists killing my friends who defend my land and nation, they betray our country and nation. Women don’t have even this view. For men, there is an ideological political ground even it is sloppy. For example, I wasn’t taken on the anniversary of 10th of October , but my women friends were taken into the custody. Apparently, when women friends were sitting, female officers came and said; “Are you flirting with the police, are you a whore, why are you

²⁰“Bir sınıf kını vardı. İdeolojik bir kin de vardı. Mesela bu bana kıyafetim üzerinden yaptığı şey işte bana şey demişti ben sana mini etek gitme demedim bu zaten bir de yakışsa. Muhtemelen öyle benim fiziksel olarak kötü çirkin hissetmemin ben üzeceğini falan düşünerek dedi.”

²¹“Bunlar psikolojik işkence teknikleri. Bu taciz çünkü yani hani şiddet ve darp bir insanın bedenine onun üzerindeki fiziksel gücünü ve şiddetini kullanarak nüfuz etmen ve zarar vermek bir şey. Bir de onun bedenine rıza ve şey dahil olmadan ve yine herhangi bir direnme koşulu olmadan teması sürdürmek temas etmek yani darp kadar bazen daha rahatsız edici bir şey yani. Taciz yani bu. Cinsel taciz. Bunların tanımı ceza hukukunda cinsel tacizde giriyor. Ben bu süreçte şeyi anladım yani. İşte işkenceye yaklaşımımız kendi içimizde de şey olarak değişiyor ya hani işte az vurdular çok vurdular işkencenin tacizin de olduğu gibi azı çoğu yok yani. İşkence işkencedir. Ve tabi ki bu ülkede çok daha ileri düzeyde işkence cinsel taciz gözetli sürecinde taciz işkence yaşandı ve bu gerçeklikler var ama yani hani limitini ve bunun dozajına göre bir hiyerarşi kurmak işkencenin bir insanlık suçu yani sadece işkencenin bir insanlık suçu olduğu şeyi böyle şey bir hale getiriyor muğlak bir hale getiriyor yani. Daha ilerisi mi daha azı mı? Öyle bir şey yok yani. Bu taciz ve işkence.”

opening your legs?” There is nothing political. They just mimic the male officers and they are trying to be crueler.”²²

Gender lenses are not only necessary to comprehend acts of violence and insults of perpetrators whose discourses are very much affected by norms of gender, but also for the victims who have their own attributions related to gender in regarding this incident. This proves that we are in need of research on perpetrators and must consider gender as a necessary analytical perspective.

Yağmur recalls:

“One of the female officers was wearing a headscarf. That day was a sacred day or something and she was fasting. Then, one of the male officers which was their chief asked her whether she was fasting in this day and said that her fast was broken by beating us. She answered; ‘I gained many credits from God, it’s is not a sin to beat these terrorists, it is charity’ while she was hitting someone’s head to the windows of the bus.”²³

Begona Aretxaga discusses the strip searches to women prisoners in Northern Ireland and she considers the strip searches as “ritualized display of military power that was deployed within the area of sexuality, a deployment that was aimed at producing maximum effect of terror.” (Aretxaga 2001). Strip searches for her aims to “transform the body of the militant into the sexualized body of the subjugated women.”(Aretxaga 2001). Here also, sexual violence and insults are deployed to create omnipotence and fear in line with my argument of the police’s attempt to create a culture of fear.

²²Kadın polisler erkek polislerden daha iğrençler bence. Çünkü şey toplumun en gerici tabanı kadın polisler çünkü hiçbir şekilde kimlik algıları yok. Mesela erkek polisler daha ideolojik. Yani diyor ki işte bunlar terrorist benim vatanımı milletimi savunan arkadaşlarımı öldürtüyor bu vatana bu millet ihanet ediyor gibi falan. Kadınlarda bu algı bile yo. Erkeklerde uyduruktan da olsa bir ideolojik temel politik bir Zemin de var. kadınlarda mesela şey ben alınmamıştım ama 10 ekim yıldönümünde gözaltına kadın arkadaşlar alınmıştı. İşte kadınlar otururken şey diğer kadın polis gelip şey demiş; sen çeviklere mi sulanıyorsun, orospuluk mu yapıyorsun, niye bacaklarını açıyorsun bizimkilere mi yavşıyorsunuz falan demişti. Yani hiç politik bir şey değil yani.ani o insanlar niye ordaymış hani bunun anlayışı olmaksızın sadece o erkek polisleri taklit ediyor daha da acımasız olmaya çalışıyor.

²³“İçlerinden birisi başörtülüydü kadın çeviklerin. Ve o gün işte kandildi işte oruç tutuyormuş sonra erkek polislerden bir tanesi o polis amiri gelip işte sne bugün oruçlu değil misin, kandil günü bunları dövdün işte bir sürü günaha girdin senin orucun gitti. Hayır çok sevap kazandım. Terörist dövmek sevaptır.”

4. IN CUSTODY

“Say, O disbelievers. I do not worship what you worship. Nor do you worship what I worship. Nor do I serve what you serve. Nor do you serve what I serve. You have your way, and I have my way.”

Surah Al-Kafirun, Quran

Sixteen students I interviewed were arrested and imprisoned in the conditions of the state of emergency declared with the coup attempt on 15th of July 2016. According to the state of emergency regulations, detainees could be held in custody for up to 21 days before any charges could be brought. Therefore, the students were held in custody ranging from 2 days to 12 days. According to many of them, spending time in custody was one of the worst parts of being arrested, even though some of them subsequently served time in prison. Students arrested for a maximum of one month faced different circumstances in various police stations. Some of them were alone, unlike others, but they were all afraid of encountering violence either from police officers or other inmates who belonged to rightist or jihadist political organizations. Since they were taken into custody as suspects of “political crimes” and announced as suspected “terrorists,” especially in the media, there was a possibility of hostile or even violent encounters with other detainees. In this chapter, I focus on students’ different experiences in police custody before they were taken to a state penitentiary.

4.1 Hostile Encounters

Emre, a 29 year old master’s student who has never been arrested before, told me at one point of the interview that “I guess the worst place I have ever been is the Vatan police station.” He was never arrested before as a politically active student on the campus. He defines himself as “anti-authoritarian” rather than socialist, so

he was not organized politically by any kind of socialist group. Both of his parents are civil servants in one of the Western cities of Turkey. Although his parents vote for CHP, he mentioned his issues with Kemalism. The university is the center of his political activities, including workshops, protests, and occupations in the campus boundaries. He is the last student who was arrested in the incident. He was taken after he left the library around 1 a.m walking with his friends.

After a nonviolent ride to the police station, he was taken to the basement of Vatan police station, which is known as a center for the suspects of “political” or “terror” crimes in Istanbul. Vatan police station is particularly known for its poor and hostile environment. Therefore, some students were afraid to be taken there due to rumors of torture, especially against suspected “terrorists”. Emre was anxious about strip-search or torture when he arrived at the station. He was asked to take off his clothes except for his underwear, but he stated that police officers did not treat him poorly. He refers to the police officers’ attitudes as formal before he was taken to his cell. Police officers only warned him constantly when he insistently was crossing his legs or putting his hands into his pockets. For Emre, this was hilarious.

Emre vividly recalls the details of the custody. There was a slim corridor in every ward containing four cells that could take three average bodies at most and three plastic beds for these bodies. The only dirty small window in the ward could not bring any light to stuffy humid underground cells, although fluorescent lamps burned their eyes day and night. There was nothing proper to eat. They all wished to be transported to prison to shower, smoke, eat, and sleep properly. When Emre arrived at the cell in the basement of the Vatan police station, everyone was pacing back and forward through the slim corridor opening on to the small cells. While he was sitting in his cell, other detainees warned him that his bones would rot if he did not get up and pace too. As he started to pace backward and forwards in the slim corridor, he learned that 6-7 of the 15 detainees were suspected of being a ISIS member. He recalled how he felt anxious about others’ observing eyes. At one point, he remembered hearing a beautiful voice reading the Kur’ an. He was dazzled with this “harmonical” voice. He informed me later that there were many books in the cells, mostly the Kur’ an. Meanwhile, detainees explained to him how they live peacefully and respectfully in the ward, although they belong to competing political organizations such as DHKP-C or ISIS. He remembers responding, “This is ideal Turkey”. Supposed ISIS members were telling stories about Islam while criticizing and even insulting the AKP government. Emre was carefully listening to their conversation, and they started to converse by asking and answering basic questions about Islam for teaching purposes, according to Emre. At this point, Emre said:

“I asked; do you know the surah al-kafirun?
 They said: ‘of course we know it.’
 I said: this is my favorite in the Quran. I love it.
 ‘Do you really know? Of course, we know, but I know the Arabic version,
 I do not know the Turkish translation.’
 ‘Not a problem. I know the Turkish translation. I can recite it to you if
 you want.’
 ‘Yes, yes. Say’
 ‘Say, “O disbelievers. I do not worship what you worship. Nor do you
 worship what I worship. Nor do I serve what you serve. Nor do you
 serve what I serve.”’

Although Emre considered his move as risky, after this conversation, they shook hands. Overall, many of them built friendly communication with inmates like Emre. Some of them mainly talked highly of their cellmates since mostly people comforted and consoled them. The cells contained many people taken for petty crimes like burglary and selling drugs or “terror” crimes like FETÖ or ISIS or Dhkp-c. Nevertheless, despite the different or even competing ideologies, hostile encounters did not happen in the cells. This was a place where everyone respects each other as ISIS suspects told to Emre. Certainly, Emre’s narrative cannot be generalized, but I argue that students’ experience is worthy of rethinking our conceptions of detainment.

With the anti-terror law which passed in 1991 and broadened in 2007, “political crimes” have been categorized as terror crimes due to a very vague and broad legal definition of terror in Turkey (Bargu 2014; Yonucu 2018a). Since then, the anti-terror law has been weaponized against different ethnoreligious groups, including Kurdish, leftist, and Alevi activists, yet especially after the 15th July coup attempt, it has also been weaponized against privileged groups (Yonucu 2018a, 13). The number of detained “terror” suspects increased to 18,173 until 2016. With the coup attempt, 50,000 people were arrested. Hence, police stations and prisons were overcrowded with “dissidents” from various ideologies or political organizations. Yet, people manage to construct a collective life with its own social and cultural norms. Veena Das and Deborah Poole argue that:

“Paradoxically, these spaces of exception are also those in which the creativity of the margins is visible, as alternative forms of economic and political are instituted.”(Das N.d., 19)

I believe these kinds of encounters necessitate further research.

On the other hand, the tone of the encounters and their narrativization change according to students' background, class positions, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality as well as bodily appearances. For example, one of the Kurdish students I talked to, Murat, mentioned his cellmate, who looked like a rightist mafia leader. According to Murat, the mafia leader warned him 'not to divide the country'. In these kinds of situations, students usually choose to be in comply in order to avoid harm as did Murat, who did not argue with his cellmate.

4.2 The Interview

After two days in custody, around 11 p.m., Anıl was taken from his cell by a couple of police officers for unknown reasons. He asked whether they were going to meet his lawyer but got no clear answer. As they passed the meeting room for lawyers and inmates, he started to feel anxious, imagining a violent interrogation. He was taken to an empty room except for one desk and two chairs accompanied by two men; one was old, the other is young. He noticed some biscuits, a cup of tea, and cigarettes alongside pink files similar to court files on the table. The two men started with simple questions; "Where are you from?", "What is your department in the university?". He obediently and politely answered their questions. They said, "You are an intelligent student; everyone in your university is smart". Then, they opened the pink file and asked, "I see your mother is a civil servant. You would not want something to happen to them?" They showed many photographs from the protest repeatedly and forced him to identify the students. Anıl said he could not speak without his lawyer's presence with a polite smile. Meantime, he was eating biscuits, drinking tea, and smoking as much as he could. At one point, they took the cigarettes, and they said, "Look, boy, you are making a mistake. We will come tomorrow too but won't talk like this". The following night, he was taken to the same room with the same table, which was empty this time except for a large black leather file containing printed photos on A4 white papers pages from the protest. The old one was sitting in the chair while the young one had approached next to him. They asked for the names of the people in photographs again. He repeatedly replied as "I do not know". The young man threateningly pulled his hair and hit his head to the table every time he did not answer them. They showed another printed photograph and asked him to identify the student. Again, he said he did not know. The young one pulled his hair and hit his head to the table while saying fiercely;

“Don’t you know the person in your class? Isn’t this your best friend?”. He was too stunned to talk; his saliva was all over the table. The interrogation continued with the videos from the protest by slapping, pulling his ears and hair, hitting his head to the table. On one point, after his nose had started to bleed, they took him to his cell.

At the end of his interrogation story, Anil mentioned that he does not remember all the details of the interrogation. Nevertheless, he did not pose once or correct himself. His narrative was very structured and elaborate. He was deepening his voice while repeating the sentences of police officers. This was not his first time telling his narrative, as he mentioned. While finishing his interrogation narrative, he added:

“They asked a couple of people by their names. Like; Isn’t this him? I suppose I might have said yes to them at one point in the beating. I do not know. I guess I did say. I said. I said.”¹

Several other students also faced this interrogation process called “interview” by lawyers and probably police officers. Female students were not subjected to physical violence, unlike others. However, the interrogation was terrifying for them, too, because of the threats and psychological violence. One of them told me how she could not sleep in prison because of these threats concerning her family. Police officers interrogating her explicitly stated that if she refused to give names of the people in the photographs, her future would be over, and even her siblings could not find any jobs. She described this interrogation process as “terrifying,” but she refused to give any bit of information. She emphasized, “I would never betray my friends”.

4.3 Torture

I met with Ahmet, 25 years old, a student in social sciences, in a mall. The first thing surprising about him was how talkative and energetic he was while we were wandering around the mall to choose somewhere to conduct our interview. This

¹“bir iki kişinin şey dedi sordular ismiyle sordular bu şu değil mi diye sanırım onlara evet demiş olabilirim dayanın bi noktasında bilmiyorum dedim herhalde dedim dedim öyle”

was my first interview with a student who spent time in prison. He was talking fast and jumping from one topic to another while trying to find a quiet spot. Similar education backgrounds had become the main topic for us to chat until finally, I took out my recording device and put it on the table. After I asked him to start from the beginning, he elaborately described the incidents on the day of the protest and emphasized his spontaneous presence in the scene. He was not a member of any political organization; in other words, “not organized”, so he was not expecting to be arrested. Ahmet was living with his mother in Istanbul, but they are from Edirne. He neither belonged to any ethnoreligious minority nor has been arrested before.

After a long and violent journey as I describe in chapter 2, Ahmet was taken to Vatan police station by civilian police officers who intentionally yelled “PKK sevici-
cilerinin sonu ölümdür”² at the entrance of the station to let know other officers know about his “crime”. Once he entered the station, police officers threateningly started to ridicule and frighten him by saying things like, “you will need a pair of clean underwear because you might shit yourself”. However, when they were upstairs signing papers, he remembers police officers mocking him earlier behaving formally and professionally. The tone of the threats had changed while they were going down the stairs to the cells. He describes the environment as “harsh” and “tense” as 15-20 police officers were pushing him around. Police officers accused him of being a “terrorist” and said and insulted him. Police officers told him that his education life was over, and that he should bear the consequences. Then, they took him in a room containing only one table pushed next to the wall. There was a stocky, fat older man over seventy-five, wearing a bizarre ring. He was not looking like a cop, Ahmet explained to me later; he was very short and old, unlike the others he encountered. This man started to beat him while insulting him. Ahmet recalls:

“He was slapping, hitting etc. He started to make me speak. He said, ‘jump!’ to me. Like why am I jumping? He hit. He said, ‘jump’. By the way, we were in a state of emergency at that time. I was carrying the fear of that. We were in a state of emergency; they could kill me and throw my body somewhere. You never know. That fear, I do not know. Now I think it is a silly fear, but one cannot think this way at that moment.”³

²“The end of the PKK sympathizers is death”

³“işte tokat falan atıyor n işte vuruyor vesaire vesaire anlattırmaya başladı zıpla dedi bana niye zıplıyorum falan vurdu zıpla dedi ya sonra bi de o zamanlar ohaldeyiz ya biz aklımda da şey korkusu çok var ya ohaldeyiz bunlar beni öldürüp bir yere atar hiç belli olmaz yani o korku ya bilmiyorum şu an düşündüğüm zaman çok saçma bir korku ama o an insan bunu düşünmüyor”

Meantime, Ahmet was coming up with various explanations to make sense of the situation." At that moment, I thought that this is an interrogation strategy; I will jump, my adrenalin will increase, and I will tell the truth." While he was trying to make sense of everything, the same man told him to take off his pants. When they made him crouch up and down wearing only his underwear, he also thought this was some kind of examination similar to one he experienced in the exams of military school. He explained to me that he did not consider this incident as torture at that moment or as unusual until later. "Because of the state of emergency, the violence seems normalized in my head because I know the attitudes of police officers," he told me. However, he was bitter and angry while explaining this process. He emphasized: "If I see those two cops somewhere, I could seriously kill them. I could seriously kill them." ⁴

4.4 Police Are The Punishment

In "Interview" and "Torture," I tried to capture the most violent moments of custody. Although not all of them are faced with police violence in the police stations, I believe these incidents are far from being exceptions, yet they are arbitrary. According to students, in the "interview", police officers force people to inform and give names of other people who are involved in "terrorism". Among the sixteen students I interviewed, only Anıl, Tuğba, and Aslı had to face this process. According to Tuğba and Aslı, the other two female students were also interrogated and threatened. For others like Ahmet and Emre, the "interview" is a process which they heard during custody while other detainees especially suspected FETÖ members, were taken to "interview". Several students referred to the "interview" as a common method for FETÖ suspects. Ahmet remembers, for instance, his cellmate who was freed in the court after denouncing other members of FETÖ.

On the other hand, torture in custody is deployed only to Anıl and another student who did not agree to meet with me. Emre was taken to Vatan Police Station as Anıl and Ahmet but did not experience either the "interview" nor "torture". I argue that these narratives show intensified violence not only in police cars but also in custody. State violence and human rights violations have increased, especially after the coup attempt, which led to two years of state of emergency as I mentioned before. Hence,

⁴"O iki polisi herhangi bir yerde görsem cidden öldürebilirdim. Cidden öldürebilirdim. Cidden öldürebilirdim."

police violence has been systematized, institutionalized, and normalized in recent years not only in public protests but also in police stations. Even in the “democratization” process of Turkey, the contradiction between liberal police education and the illiberal practice of policing has been discussed (Akarsu 2018). Yet, now, everyone can be tortured. Everyone can be called a terrorist. As Sharika Thiranagama and Tobias Kelly state:

“The traitor lies not so much at the margins or beyond the nation but at its heart. She or he is not the stranger, the common enemy, but is, in fact, always potentially one of us.”(Thiranagama and Kelly 2011, 9)

Therefore, “if we are not careful,” they argue “we become the traitor ourselves” (Thiranagama and Kelly 2011, 10). As I argued before, I consider the arrest of the students as an attempt to marginalize students, so as to redraw the boundaries between those who deserve civil rights and others who should be punished with any means necessary.

On the other hand, although police violence has been systemized with its own techniques and technologies, I believe it is random, arbitrary, or even absurd almost pointless. Jaqueline Rose considers the arbitrary and excessive quality of violence as a symptom of a state which cannot be understood with only rationality (Rose 1998). For example, in the case of Anıl, in the “interview,” they want him to identify his friends, yet they know all of them from the photographs. Police also want him to confess the details of supposed “illegal” political organization in the university, although Anıl insistently acknowledges the spontaneousness of the protest. In Ahmet’s case, police do not ask anything except repeated general questions. As I discuss in Chapter 2, interrogation is an integral part of the torture, but not for the purposes of gathering information following Elaine Scarry.

Overall, the police try to maximize the effect of terror and fear through interrogation and torture in the name of the state. This is becoming more common and systematized every day, but it is arbitrary. This uncertainty and randomness create more fear and “culture of terror” not for only traditional “dissidents” as members of marginalized ethnoreligious groups or militants, but also for everybody and anybody.

On the other hand, the serving police officers intentionally made the conditions worsen for the students in custody in other ways too. Davut remembers police officers who came to the cells to denounce the students as “terrorists” and “traitors” to create a hostile environment in the cell. According to female students, some police

officers had not taken them to smoke or order food while letting other detainees. Bilge clearly remembers some police officers smoking with murder suspects without any handcuffs while they handcuffed the students from their back. Once, Aşlı recalls that officers did not let them take their lawyers inside. After Aşlı got angry and demanded her fundamental rights, one of the officers meant to hit her if other officers would not have stopped him. While talking with the students, I heard stories similar to this:

“One day, when he (serving police officer) got angry with someone in the ward, he left all the windows open in the night and closed the ward’s door. Everyone was freezing and got sick until the morning. There was someone with a heart condition, and in the morning, paramedics had to intervene. They(police) were making these arbitrary punishments too if they got angry with someone. Like if someone does not want to eat dinner at that time as he would have to bring the food later, he says no way and gives no one any food. Or if you do this, he gives you the food cold instead of hot in the morning. Or if they give the dried beans hot, there would not be a problem, but they give it cold and laugh about this.”⁵

According to the students, arbitrary punishments to the detainees were common, yet depended on the discretion of the serving police officer. As Didier Fassin argues; "in the eyes of law enforcement agents as well as, in many cases, from the perspective of their institution, the excessive use of force can find its justification as a legitimate, if not legal, way to dispense justice on the street." (Fassin 2020, 543) Hence, he argues that whether suspected people are guilty or not; the police are the punishment. Moreover, Fassin quotes Weber, who states, "Punishment has remained for us what it was for our predecessors," as "an act of vengeance." (Fassin 2020, 547). Similarly, I argue that being arrested itself is a punishment because of normalized and institutionalized mistreatments of police officers during arrest, in the police car, and in custody.

⁵“başka bir gün mesela nezarethanedeki birisine kızdığında şey yaptı geceleyin bütün pencereleri açık bıraktı ve nezarethanenin de kendi kapısını da kapattı sabaha kadar herkes hani hasta hani donmuştu bi kişi hasta oldu öyle kalp hastası birisi vardı onun sabahında şey paramedikler geldi hani adama müdahale etmek zorunda kalmışlardı böyle arbitrary cezalandırmaları da yapıyorlar bir kişiye kızdıkları için ya da ne bileyim bi kişi yemeğini yemek istemiyor o saatte daha sonradan yemek getirmek zorunda kalacağı için olur mu öyle şey diye kimseye yemek vermiyor ya da ne bileyim bunu yaptıysan mesela sabahleyin ısıtıp veriyorsa yemeği sana soğuk veriyor ya da evet kuru fasulyeleri genelde ısıtıp verirlerse bi problem olmuyor ama hep soğuk vermeye çalışıyordu mesela gülüyordu ”

5. IN PRISON/AFTERMATH

5.1 In Prison

In this chapter, my purpose is twofold: first, I want to focus on the time students spent in prison, and second, I turn my attention to the aftermath of students' arrest. In the first part, I try to depict how students narrate and relate to prison life. In the last part of the interviews, students often described prison life in detail. Nine of the sixteen students I interviewed spent time in prison for approximately two months. Only two of them are women. Hence, I mainly focus on male students who spent time in Silivri prison.

Ahmet remembers his time in Silivri vividly and fondly. He was rather overwhelmed after the violent process of custody. When he arrived at his cell in Silivri prison, everyone, including other students, warmly welcomed him and quickly provided his needs such as bed, sheets, slippers, soap. Similarly, Emre recalls how other inmates offered him tea and treated him with care. Emre attributes their care and tenderness to the possibility of violence which he might have endured. All the students recalled the prison time in a similar vein. They emphasized the friendly and cooperative environment where a division of labor and helping each other were essential. Everyone had a duty to fulfill, while every decision must be taken collectively.

This was a “political” cell, containing people who were arrested because of “political crimes”. With the anti-terror law which passed in 1991 and broadened in 2007, “political crimes” have been categorized as terror crimes due to a very vague and broad legal definition of terror in Turkey (Bargu 2014; Yonucu 2018*a*). Since then, anti-terror law has been weaponized against different ethnoreligious groups, including Kurdish, leftist, and Alevi activists, yet especially after the 15th July coup attempt, it has also been weaponized against privileged groups (Yonucu 2018*a*, 13).

However, as Ahmet and others expressed, no one was a member of any political organization like DHKP-C or PKK or FETÖ. According to the students, these kinds of organizations have their own wards, and arrested people could choose their cells according to their political affiliation. Hence, this ward was “political” because it usually contained people with similar charges of political crimes rather than petty crimes. Ahmet was surprised to see so many people who were arrested because of social media posts in the ward, especially due to insulting the president.

Banu Bargu also describes “political” wards while investigating hunger strikes against F-type prisons called high-security prisons, which forces inmates into solitary confinement and small-group isolation in her book, “Starve and Immolate: The Politics of Human Weapons” (Bargu 2014). Although Bargu focuses on political wards which belong to Kurdish and leftist militants, there are many similarities between the two different “political” wards. As Bargu depicts:

“What was distinctive about “political” wards was the way most of them were quickly organized into what prisoners called ward communes. Ward communes are comprised of various committees with the responsibility of organizing and managing different facets of prison life for the prisoners of the same ward, which could involve between thirty to one hundred individuals (or more, depending on the degree of "overcrowding" in prison). Prisoners assumed membership on these committees by election or by rotation, depending on existing numbers. The ward commune oversaw a range of functions, including planning, coordinating, distributing, and managing daily tasks and activities, providing for basic needs, and handling relations with the outside world”(Bargu 2014, 167)

In addition to the division of labor in the ward, students also mentioned a common adjustment period for the first week of prison time. When students arrived at the ward, everyone had one week to adapt to the environment while other detainees accomplished daily duties. Hence, the culture of collective life, which takes everyone’s needs into consideration, was dominant in the ward.

Ahmet also mentioned his cellmates, and he recounted, “I learned to love humanity a little,” referring to his two months in Silivri prison. The life in Silivri, for him, is the ideal life he imagines in the outside. When I asked him why, he explained the ward life was cooperative, friendly, and helpful to everyone. The division of labor concerning necessary duties and forums for necessary decisions in the ward ensures this cooperative and egalitarian environment. He stated:

“The first time in my life, I shared my bread with someone willingly and eagerly, and first time maybe, someone shared his bread with me this willingly and from their heart.”¹

He remembered Osman; a 19 year old Kurdish construction worker who had been imprisoned because of social media. After a long interview containing violent experiences, it was the first time I could see tears in his eyes. He emphasized with a thrilling voice, “he was more human than me”. Although Osman had been working since he was 13 years old as a construction worker who could hardly make a living, according to Ahmet, Osman never hesitated to share his dinner with him or never let Ahmet mop the floors when it was Ahmet’s turn to clean. According to Ahmet, many people were also taken randomly, even the ones who are rightist. For example, he remembered the workers in the printing house of BirGün newspaper. When the newspaper was shut down, the police arrested all the workers in the printing house, although they were only working there for better working conditions, not due to their political affiliations. Ahmet was laughing at this absurdity.

Similarly, Emre recounted his prison time as “heaven” after his time in custody because of his cellmates’ efforts to make him comfortable, especially when he first arrived. Emre defined prison life as “industrial socialism,” where everyone must fulfill their duties. He was particularly impressed by small inventions to improve their ward circumstances, like setting up a mechanism to clean the water. He also contributed to this effort by engineering a cardboard for the fluorescent lamps in the night. He fondly remembered Ensar, his cellmate who gave Emre a haircut. Ensar is a Kurdish singer who came from poor living conditions, according to Emre.

The anecdotes about Osman and Ensar could be considered as friendly encounters with which students heard and touched the “strange”. As Sara Ahmed describes hearing:

“To hear, or to give the other a hearing, is to be moved by the other, such that one ceases to inhabit the same place. To think of hearing as touch is to consider that being open to hearing might not be a matter of listening to the other’s voice: what moves (between) subjects, and hence what fails to move, might precisely be that which cannot be presented in the register of speech, or voicing.”(Ahmed 2000, 156)

¹“hayatımda ilk defa biriyle belki de bu kadar isteyerek ve severek ekmeğimi paylaştım ve ilk defa belki de biri benle bu kadar isteyerek ve gönülden ekmeğimi paylaştı diyebilirim”

On the other hand, these anecdotes point to divisions and differences in the ward. This ward included people from different ethnoreligious groups and class positions, but in general, compared to the students, they were underprivileged. Emre stated:

“I mean there are different groups and the state put them in a category, but actually they are totally different. There are Turkish leftists. There are Kurdish leftists. In the same ward, I mean among Kurdish leftists, there are anarchists, there are socialists. I do not know; there are men, there are others.”²

These positions affected how people related to each other in the ward. Emre recalls while one inmate warned him to fulfill his cleaning duty, and a young Kurdish inmate took the mop from his hands. Emre told me that he realized there were different groups in the ward later. He refers to this as a “war for power”.

Ironically, one of the sharp divisions was between the students themselves. Anil refers to one group as “originals” while calling the other one “goygoycu”³ which includes students who “sing loudly” and “play volleyball all the time”. Anil mentioned how he felt disturbed to be remembered with other group’s actions since they are the “young children of a socialist generation”. Hence, Anil and the others talked about some disagreements between students in general: these narratives can be considered rumors. Yet, these details help me avoid generalization and homogenization between students and in the ward in general. Bargu argues that “the intensity and significance of the lived experience of the ward commune” contribute to the “emergence of the district, radical, and unified collective will among prisoners of different affiliations and sectarian differences”(Bargu 2014, 170). Although the ward commune positively shapes the collective life in the political wards, I argue we should not underestimate the differences and power relations concerning not only class and ethnicity but also sexuality. I believe that much research is needed in this area especially in ‘political wards’. Lila Abu Lughod cautions us to look for power when there are resistance and vice versa (Abu-Lughod 1990). Thus, we should be careful not to romanticize ‘resistance’.

²“yani farklı farklı gruplar var ve yani devlet bir kategoriye sokmuş da yani aslında gerçekten bambaşka kaldı ki yani işte şeyler var türk solcuları var içerde kürt solcuları var aynı koşuştta yani işte kürt solcuları arasında anarşistler var sosyalistler var işte ne bileyim erkek olan var erkek olmayan var yani”

³This can be translated as a windbag.

5.2 Family Relations

I met Gül in a café close to my home while she was on the way to visit her family. The first thing I noticed was the book, “The Disoriented” by Amin Maalouf that she was carrying. When we were saying goodbyes after the interview, she was going to tell me how she considered the book parallel to her own life. Later, when I read the book, I learned that the book’s story was about college friends, some had to stay through the war in their homeland while others escaped from the war. Maybe, this was also her dilemma as a children’s rights activist. Gül was a 24 year old who was newly graduated from the university. She described to me in detail her activist work in the university during our 3.5 hours interview. The university was the center of her activities while she and her friends were teaching children from disadvantageous areas, organizing activities in Children’s day, and reporting children’s rights violations. Gül defines herself neither as a socialist nor communist, but merely as someone against “all kinds of human rights violations”.

Her family, including her father, who was retired from the military and her mother, a housewife, was against her activism. She and her friends went to eastern Turkey to report children’s rights violations when the war between the Turkish government and the PKK was intensified and moved to the city centers in 2015. Therefore, she knew from experience that the state is violent, and “violence creates violence”. Yet, she was never arrested before and shocked to be taken for no reason from the campus protest. She is one of the seven students who were patrolled around the city for eight hours.

Her father was retired from the military while her grandfather was retired from the police force. She grew up in public housing for families of the military. When they moved to the housing complex, her mother took off her scarf and never wore it again. She does not remember her mother with a headscarf. She recounted their life in public housing as full of fear, especially in the 2000s, when she was a small child because of the war between the Turkish state and Kurdish guerillas. She remembers how all the people in the public housing facilities, including her parents and brother, wore a black ribbon whenever a soldier was killed. She recalls:

“This was a time when many news of martyrs was coming, and soldiers were dying. Moreover, there was an idea that soldiers were our fathers. I mentioned some time; a vehicle was coming to the housing; everyone was getting on and getting off together because the military quarter is the

same place. They stopped this because they started to think the vehicle was dangerous because if they (PKK) bomb the vehicle, all of them will die. They were going as civilians. They were going on their own, and they were dressing up in the quarter. They were protecting themselves in this way, and this, in that way, some people might attack. Anyway, there were guns everywhere. A bomb exploded in front of our home. The person who was there committed suicide and there were other suicides.”⁴

She clearly remembers the death of the guard on one of the doors of the housing complex. After the attack on that door, the soldier committed suicide. She continued, “they did not clean the blood of the soldier who killed himself”. She was referring to the wall where the soldier’s blood spread. For her, the notion of “never-ending violence” was formed in this housing complex. When they moved to their own house and Gül changed her school, she noticed Kurdish children wearing black ribbons whenever someone was killed from their side. At that moment, she realized that everyone has their own deaths and martyrs. She realized that there was nothing to glorify about soldiers who were killing people too. She recounted, the “motherland had become meaningless” as well as the state. In high school, she joined environmental activism and Gezi protests. Meantime, she was arguing with her father constantly about her activism and political stand. However, in college, their minds started to change, too, especially because of Gül’s activism was in the war zones. Even though this was very hard for her father, who depended on the military since childhood as an orphan, she thinks that her father has finally been liberated. Now, her father knows that “violence really happens with the hands of the state” and accepts “he turned into someone disgusting when he was a soldier”. Now, together they swear to state and police violence.

Gül’s life story is an example of how activism could change the opinions of families who face state violence through their children or siblings. Even though her father had served in the military, now his political beliefs were changed. Gül’s family’s transformation began earlier than her arrest, but for some students, their arrest was a turning point for some of the families. The effect of the arrest differs according to political affiliations and backgrounds of families of the students. For example, Onur and Bilge are coming from leftist families who had been actively involved in socialist movements. Hence, their arrest was not particularly a political turning

⁴“çok şehit haberlerinin geldiği bir zamandı ve askerler ölüyordu askerler babamız gibi bir düşünce var bir de bir ara şey dedim ya lojmana araç geliyordu hepsi bir inip gidiyordu çünkü kışla aynı yer falan onu kestiler çünkü o aracın da işte tehlikeli olduğunu düşünmeye başladılar çünkü o aracı da bir bombalasalar hepsi ölür falan işte sivil gidiyolardı tek başlarına gidiyolardı ve kışlada giyiniyolardı falan hani böyle kendilerini böyle koruyolardı ve bu bir kere o zaman birileri saldırabilir zaten her yerde silah var zaten evimizin önünde bomba patlamış ordaki kişi intihar etmiş ve başka intiharlar da oldu”

point for their parents. Some students like Ali and Yağmur deliberately hide their arrest from their families either because of political disagreements or simply because they do not want to upset them. For some, the arrest was a turning point. For example, for Davut, who is from a conservative family whose father was in the police force before his retirement. Now, neither his parents nor his sisters vote for AKP, and they are very critical of the Turkish government. Hence, the arrest was an “embodied experience” that affects not only students themselves but also their close social circles and social relations. Davut states:

“For example, I was considering my father as a good cop because my father, for example, did so much help to poor neighborhoods etc. In fact, when I was a small kid, my father was like... I do not know, do you remember Gaffar Okkan? There was a chief of police named Gaffar Okkan, assassinated, in Diyarbakır. He was like very close to people. He was someone I always identify my father with. He was a good cop, I mean. When I went to the police station, cops who took care of me, conversed with me were always good cops in my head, but at some point, they could transform into something else, for example. I guess I was supposed to live through this to see that.”⁵

On the other hand, Gül’s and other students’ life stories show how personal memories cannot be separated from historical and social conditions. War and violence are embedded in the everyday lives of students. Their life histories are curved in relation to Turkey’s history of war and violence. Moreover, their “embodied memory” has changed the way in which they reappropriate collective and personal histories.

5.3 Fear

One of the prominent emotions in all interviews I conducted was fear. The fear students feel mainly came up while discussing the aftermath of the arrested or imprisoned time. I suggest this fear had impacted not only their political selves

⁵Mesela babamın iyi bir polis olduğunu düşünüyordum falan filan çünkü babam mesela şey falan da çok yapardı böyle işte fakir mahallelere falan çok yardım yapardı vesaire böyle ben hatta ondan dolayı küçükken babamı biraz böyle gaffar okkanı sen hatırlar mısın bilmiyorum da gaffar okkan diye bir emniyet müdürü vardı diyarbakırda suikast ile öldürülmüştü falan filan böyle o da böyle halka çok yakın bir insandı falan filan böyle hep onla özdeşleştirdiğim biriydi babam falan vesaire böyle iyi polisti yani o karakola gittiğim zaman benle işte ilgilenen benle muhabbet eden polisler de kafamda hep iyi polisti ama yeri geldiğinde çok başka bir noktaya dönebiliyorlarmış ya mesela onu görmem için bunu yaşamam gerekiyordu yani herhalde

but also their individual selves. One of the obvious reasons for this fear is that the police kept following some students after the arrest. For instance, Gül and Ali could not come to campus for at least one week after the arrest. All seven of them who were taken from the protest were afraid of being arrested again. Yagmur, Gül, and Zeynep mentioned realized that civilian police officers who were following them after their release. Gül noticed someone in front of her apartment at least for a week. Yagmur and Zeynep noticed civilian police officers who were taking their pictures inside the campus.

On the other hand, students who spent time in prison mentioned feeling anxious in police encounters. Many students described their experience in terms similar to these:

“I still feel anxious when I see the police. For example, when they stop me for an identity check, I feel anxious. I know they will not see anything because I do not have any search warrant or anything, I mean if the lawsuit comes up there, it probably comes up. I mean, there is nothing wrong with that, there is no crime, but I do not know. I still think about whether the police will do something, cross me or tell me something. I still break into a cold sweat during identity checks, but besides that, I’m startled when I hear a siren or something.”⁶

Fear is embodied in their everyday life. For instance, Onur recounted;

“The purpose of the torture is that when you go to something, think three times, think five times. I mean, they do this for a purpose. If I were scared, I would not have held myself back like this, but I did. One time, in Kadıköy, last year, what was it; there was a protest, I knew people were going to be arrested. If I would have gone to the front, I would have been arrested too. Normally, I would go, for instance, but I did not after that incident.”⁷

⁶“hala polisi görünce biraz tedirgin olurum mesela gbt ye çevirdikleri zaman hala tedirgin olurum hani bişey çıkmayacağını biliyorum hani aramam falan yok hani orda dava görüntüyosa görüntüyodur bunda bişey yok hani suç değil sonuçta ama hani ne bileyim hala diyorum ya bu adam acaba şeylik yapar mı burda bana tersime gider mi yani laf eder mi falan diye hala hani gbt yapılırken falan öyle biraz şey ufaktan soğuk terler dökerim yani ama onun dışında başka bir siren falan duyduğumda mesela bir irkilirim onun dışında bir sorun yok ama yani

⁷“işkencenin amacı birşey daha böyle bişeye girerken üç kere düşün beş kere düşün falan hani belli bir amaç için yapıyorlar hani korksam bile şey yapardım herhalde geri durmazdım böyle ama sonra durdum da yani bir kere kadıköyde geçen sene ne vardı ne eylemi bişiy eylemi vardı normalde gözaltına alınan insanlar olacaktı biliyodum en öne gitsem ben de gözaltına alınırdım normalde giderdim mesela sonra gitmedim o olaydan sonra”

Zeynep narrates the effects of violence:

“How can I say? Of course, sexual assault makes you feel bad, but for example, in my perspective, I do not want to say, I mean I do not want to express it. How can I explain it? On one side, no; I am a revolutionary, this is unrelated. Nevertheless, on the other side, no; this affects you; you have to confront yourself. I guess you cannot confront these kinds of things. I mean, I am tired of getting beaten, for example. Actually, it feels like that it is enough; let us not get beaten anymore. I realized feeling worse after the beating, feeling so insulted. I also felt a bit lack of confidence after the arrests, but it is not easy to accept this initially. I am telling this know, I can tell this know because there is no problem know; it has been one year since.”⁸

In addition, they also mentioned some adaptation problems after their release. Anil recounted his drug and alcohol abuse while Zeynep sought help from a psychiatrist. Anxiety and depression have become common for students. Lorenzo D’Orsi argues that “knowing how to be afraid” is a part of the embodied knowledge of the leftist youth subculture in Turkey (D’Orsi 2018, 14). Hence, the students also learned how to be afraid in the encounters with the police. Linda Green states in her work on Guatemala:

“Fear is the reality in which people live, the hidden ‘state of (individual and social) emergency’ that is factored into the choices women and men make. Although this state of emergency in which Guatemala has being living for over a decade may be the norm.”(Green 1995)

Similarly, I argue that not only students but all of us have been living under the reality of fear, which affects our political choices, family relations, and everything. The reality of violence can be seen not so much in facts; rather it can be seen through these affective worlds and words of particular people.

⁸“Ya nasıl desem tabi ki şey cinsel saldırıya uğradığın için kötü hissediyorsun ama şeyi ben kendi açımdan mesela çok söylemek istemiyorum yani ifade etmek istemiyorum bunu ha biraz şey nasıl diyeyim hayır canım ben devrimciyim ne alakası var gibi bişey oluyo ama diğer taraftan da hayır bu seni etkiliyor biraz kendinle yüzleşmen gerekiyor falan öyle şeylerde çok yüzleşemiyosun galiba yani ben mesela dayak yemekten yoruldum aslında hani artık tamam ya yani yemesek mi artık gibi oluyor işte dayak yiyince kötü hissettiğimi falan da farkettim çok aşağılanmış hisset yani gözaltından sonra böyle bir hafif bir özgüven kırılması yaşadığımı falan da hissettim ama çok kabullenmek şey olmuyo ilk baş ilk zaman şu an anlatıyorum şu an söylerim şu an sorun yok çünkü bir sene geçti aradan ve o psikolojik olarak artık zaten şeysin bir ritüel de olduğu için diğer taraftan ama ilk başta hani o aşağılanma hisse o şey falan kabul etmek istemediğin özgüven kıran hisler oluyor”

6. CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I depicted the encounter between the police and students. The reason why I chose to study this particular encounter between the state and university students is the shocking excessiveness of police intrusion. As this intrusion is unrepresented in its form and excess, I wanted to study the violence in the immediacy of its manifestation (Nordstrom and Robben 1995, 6). Additionally, and significantly, I am personally invested in documenting violence in this particular university as a former student. Although I graduated two years ago, I still visit the campus, attend some classes, spend time in library. The campus is a place where I call home for a long time. Hence, I consider myself as a witness of such violence not only because I listened and studied the memories of students, but also, because I easily could have been one of those students. I could have been in the campus. Someone could have taken my photographs during the protest. I could have been arrested too. Therefore, I feel empathy which created an affective space for “understanding the pain of the other” (Sontag 2003). This is not to undermine the actual experience of violence, but rather to emphasize the uncertainty and randomness of violence today, in Turkey.

For these purposes, I focused on the spatial formation of these encounters during arrest, in the police car, and in custody. In this thesis, I argued that the arrest of the students is an attempt to marginalize and criminalize them. Arrest and violence are the ways to mark the body of the students not only for the public, for bystanders, but also for themselves. Hence, arrest and violence are a way of subjectification of students from various backgrounds as I discussed in detail. Life histories of students depict not only the details of the arrest but also their own social and moral worlds including relations with their families and the emotional aftermath of the incident. On the other hand, I tried to emphasize the differences between the students in terms of background and political subjectivities in the chapters. I do not consider them as a “youth subculture” since I do not homogenize them in any way. I believe that focusing on the particularities of the individual stories is the best way to avoid homogenization and essentialism.

In the second chapter, I discussed the process of arrest. To depict the various circumstances of the arrest, I narrated three scenes which I consider as the typical three ways of arrest. I emphasized the spatial and performative aspects of the arrest in its excessiveness. Furthermore, in this chapter, I also focused on the history of youth and politics and the heterogeneity of the students I interviewed. I argued that the arrest is a way to interpellate, marginalize, and criminalize the students.

In the third chapter, I turned my attention to student experiences in the police car. I consider the police car as a “space of exception” where violence is normalized, systematized and even banalized. Through the narratives of students, I also discussed the discourses of police officers. Here, I argued that violence is never out of context, and the body of the dissident is not independent from attributes of class, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. The tone of police violence changes accordingly to these attributes. I also emphasized the discourse of police officers is an integral part of violence and the police’s attempt to make students feel omnipotence, terror, fear and humiliation. In addition, in this chapter, I underlined the gendered aspects of violence.

In the fourth chapter, I concentrated on student encounters with other detainees and police officers in custody. I discussed the experience of being in custody with three particular student narratives. I drew attention to different experiences in custody. Through these narratives, I argued for the randomness yet commonness of the police violence in custody. Although violence is deepened and institutionalized in the police force, police discretion is a significant in the different experiences of the students. Following Didier Fassin, I argued that the police itself is a punishment.

In the last chapter, I focused on the prison experiences of students and the aftermath of state violence. In those experiences, I also emphasized the heterogeneity among the students and “political” wards. On the other hand, discussing family relations helped me to understand expanding boundaries of the state which deploys violence more and more even to privileged groups. I argued that excessive police violence including arrest, torture, interrogation is a way to create a “culture of terror and fear”. I discussed the narratives of fear in the aftermath of the arrest. Overall, the experience of the students is an “embodied memory” which affects them in various ways accordingly to their particular reappropriation of the experience.

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